

THE
HISTORY
OF
THE DECLINE AND FALL
OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE.

~~~~~  
BY EDWARD GIBBON.  
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WITH NOTES BY DEAN MILMAN AND M. GUIZOT.

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THE
HISTORY
OF
THE DECLINE AND FALL
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ROMAN EMPIRE.

CHAPTER XI.

REIGN OF CLAUDIUS — DEFEAT OF THE GOTHs — VICTORIES, TRIUMPH, AND
DEATH OF AURELIAN.

UNDER the deplorable reigns of Valerian and Gallienus the empire was oppressed and almost destroyed by the soldiers, the tyrants, and the barbarians. It was saved by a series of great princes, who derived their obscure origin from the martial provinces of Illyricum. Within a period of about thirty years, Claudius, Aurelian, Probus, Diocletian and his colleagues, triumphed over the foreign and domestic enemies of the state, re-established, with the military discipline, the strength of the frontiers, and deserved the glorious title of Restorers of the Roman world.

The removal of an effeminate tyrant made way for a succession of heroes. The indignation of the people imputed all their calamities to Gallienus, and the far greater part were, indeed, the consequence of his dissolute manners and careless administration. He was even destitute of a sense of honour, which so frequently supplies the absence of public virtue; and as long as he was permitted to enjoy the possession of Italy, a victory of the barbarians, the loss of a province, or the rebellion of a general, seldom disturbed the tranquil course of his pleasures. At length a considerable army, stationed on the Upper Danube, invested with the Imperial purple their leader Aureolus, who, Aureolus invades Italy, is defeated, and besieged at Milan. ^{A.D. 268.} disdaining a confined and barren reign over the mountains of Rætia, passed the Alps, occupied Milan, threatened Rome, and challenged

Gallienus to dispute in the field the sovereignty of Italy. The emperor, provoked by the insult, and alarmed by the instant danger, suddenly exerted that latent vigour which sometimes broke through the indolence of his temper. Forcing himself from the luxury of the palace, he appeared in arms at the head of his legions, and advanced beyond the Po to encounter his competitor. The corrupted name of Pontirolo¹ still preserves the memory of a bridge over the Adda, which, during the action, must have proved an object of the utmost importance to both armies. The Rhætian usurper, after receiving a total defeat and a dangerous wound, retired into Milan. The siege of that great city was immediately formed; the walls were battered with every engine in use among the ancients; and Aureolus, doubtful of his internal strength and hopeless of foreign succours, already anticipated the fatal consequences of unsuccessful rebellion.

His last resource was an attempt to seduce the loyalty of the besiegers. He scattered libels through their camp, inviting the troops to desert an unworthy master, who sacrificed the public happiness to his luxury, and the lives of his most valuable subjects to the slightest suspicions. The arts of Aureolus diffused fears and discontent among the principal officers of his rival. A conspiracy was formed by Heraclianus, the Prætorian præfect, by Marcian, a general of rank and reputation, and by Cecrops,^a who commanded a numerous body of Dalmatian guards. The death of Gallienus was resolved, and, notwithstanding their desire of first terminating the siege of Milan, the extreme danger which accompanied every moment's delay obliged them to hasten the execution of their daring purpose. At a late hour of the night, but while the emperor still protracted the pleasures of the table, an alarm was suddenly given that Aureolus, at the head of all his forces, had made a desperate sally from the town; Gallienus, who was never deficient in personal bravery, started from his silken couch, and, without allowing himself time either to put on his armour or to assemble his guards, he mounted on horseback and rode full speed towards the supposed place of the attack. Encompassed by his declared or concealed enemies, he soon, amidst the nocturnal tumult, received a mortal dart from an uncertain hand. Before he expired, a patriotic sentiment rising in the mind of Gallienus induced him to name a deserving successor, and it

A.D. 269.
March 20.
Death of
Gallienus.

¹ *Pons Aureoli*, thirteen miles from Bergamo, and thirty-two from Milan. See Cluver. *Italia Antiq.* tom. i. p. 245. Near this place, in the year 1703, the obstinate battle of Cassano was fought between the French and Austrians. The excellent relation of the Chevalier de Folard, who was present, gives a very distinct idea of the ground. See Polybe de Folard, tom. iiii. p. 223-248.

^a Trebellius Pollio calls him Cecropius or Ceronius.—§

was his last request that the Imperial ornaments should be delivered to Claudius, who then commanded a detached army in the neighbourhood of Pavia. The report at least was diligently propagated, and the order cheerfully obeyed by the conspirators, who had already agreed to place Claudius on the throne. On the first news of the emperor's death the troops expressed some suspicion and resentment, till the one was removed and the other assuaged by a donative of twenty pieces of gold to each soldier. They then ratified the election and acknowledged the merit of their new sovereign.²

The obscurity which covered the origin of Claudius, though it was afterwards embellished by some flattering fictions,³ sufficiently betrays the meanness of his birth. We can only discover that he was a native of one of the provinces bordering on the Danube, that his youth was spent in arms, and that his modest valour attracted the favour and confidence of Decius. The senate and people already considered him as an excellent officer, equal to the most important trusts, and censured the inattention of Valerian, who suffered him to remain in the subordinate station of a tribune. But it was not long before that emperor distinguished the merit of Claudius, by declaring him general and chief of the Illyrian frontier, with the command of all the troops in Thrace, Mæsia, Dacia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia, the appointments of the præfect of Egypt, the establishment of the pro-consul of Africa, and the sure prospect of the consulship. By his victories over the Goths he deserved from the senate the honour of a statue, and excited the jealous apprehensions of Gallienus. It was impossible that a soldier could esteem so dissolute a sovereign, nor is it easy to conceal a just contempt. Some unguarded expressions which dropped from Claudius were officiously transmitted to the royal ear. The emperor's answer to an officer of confidence describes in very lively colours his own character and that of the times. "There is not anything capable of giving me more serious concern than the intelligence contained in your last despatch,⁴ that some malicious suggestions have indisposed towards us the mind of our friend and parent Claudius. As you regard your allegiance, use every means to appease his resentment,

Character
and elevation
of the
emperor
Claudius.

² On the death of Gallienus, see Trebellius Pollio in Hist. August. p. 181. [Gallieni II., c. 14.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 40] p. 37. Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 25] p. 634 [ed. Paris; p. 602, ed. Bonn]. Eutrop. ix. 8. Aurelius Victor in Epitom. [c. 33.] Victor in Cæsar. [c. 33.] I have compared and blended them all, but have chiefly followed Aurelius Victor, who seems to have had the best memoirs.

³ Some supposed him, oddly enough, to be a bastard of the younger Gordian. Others took advantage of the province of Dardania to deduce his origin from Dardanus and the ancient kings of Troy.

⁴ *Notoria*, a periodical and official despatch which the emperors received from the *rumentarii*, or agents dispersed through the provinces. Of these we may speak hereafter.

“but conduct your negotiation with secrecy; let it not reach the knowledge of the Dacian troops; they are already provoked, and it might inflame their fury. I myself have sent him some presents: be it your care that he accept them with pleasure. Above all, let him not suspect that I am made acquainted with his imprudence. The fear of my anger might urge him to desperate counsels.”⁵ The presents which accompanied this humble epistle, in which the monarch solicited a reconciliation with his discontented subject, consisted of a considerable sum of money, a splendid wardrobe, and a valuable service of silver and gold plate. By such arts Gallienus softened the indignation and dispelled the fears of his Illyrian general, and during the remainder of that reign the formidable sword of Claudius was always drawn in the cause of a master whom he despised. At last, indeed, he received from the conspirators the bloody purple of Gallienus; but he had been absent from their camp and counsels; and however he might applaud the deed, we may candidly presume that he was innocent of the knowledge of it.⁶ When Claudius ascended the throne he was about fifty-four years of age.

The siege of Milan was still continued, and Aureolus soon discovered that the success of his artifices had only raised up a more determined adversary. He attempted to negotiate with Claudius a treaty of alliance and partition. “Tell him,” replied the intrepid emperor, “that such proposals should have been made to Gallienus; *he*, perhaps, might have listened to them with patience, and accepted a colleague as despicable as himself.”⁷ This stern refusal, and a last unsuccessful effort, obliged Aureolus to yield the city and himself to the discretion of the conqueror. The judgment of the army pronounced him worthy of death, and Claudius, after a feeble resistance, consented to the execution of the sentence. Nor was the zeal of the senate less ardent in the cause of their new sovereign. They ratified, perhaps with a sincere transport of zeal, the election of Claudius; and as his predecessor had shown himself the personal enemy of their order, they exercised, under the name of justice, a severe revenge against his friends and family. The senate was permitted to discharge the ungrateful office of punishment, and the emperor reserved for himself the pleasure and merit of obtaining by his intercession a general act of indemnity.⁸

⁵ Hist. August. p. 208. [Pollio, Claud. c. 17.] Gallienus describes the plate, vestments, &c., like a man who loved and understood those splendid trifles.

⁶ Julian (Orat. i. p. 6) affirms that Claudius acquired the empire in a just and even holy manner. But we may distrust the partiality of a kinsman.

⁷ Hist. August. p. 203. [Pollio, Claud. c. 5.] There are some trifling differences concerning the circumstances of the last defeat and death of Aureolus.

⁸ Aurelius Victor in Gallien. [De Cæsar. c. 33.] The people loudly prayed for

Such ostentatious clemency discovers less of the real character of Claudius than a trifling circumstance in which he seems to have consulted only the dictates of his heart. The frequent rebellions of the provinces had involved almost every person in the guilt of treason, almost every estate in the case of confiscation; and Gallienus often displayed his liberality by distributing among his officers the property of his subjects. On the accession of Claudius, an old woman threw herself at his feet and complained that a general of the late emperor had obtained an arbitrary grant of her patrimony. This general was Claudius himself, who had not entirely escaped the contagion of the times. The emperor blushed at the reproach, but deserved the confidence which she had reposed in his equity. The confession of his fault was accompanied with immediate and ample restitution.⁹

Clemency
and justice
of Claudius

In the arduous task which Claudius had undertaken of restoring the empire to its ancient splendour, it was first necessary to revive among his troops a sense of order and obedience. With the authority of a veteran commander, he represented to them that the relaxation of discipline had introduced a long train of disorders, the effects of which were at length experienced by the soldiers themselves; that a people ruined by oppression, and indolent from despair, could no longer supply a numerous army with the means of luxury, or even of subsistence; that the danger of each individual had increased with the despotism of the military order, since princes who tremble on the throne will guard their safety by the instant sacrifice of every obnoxious subject. The emperor expatiated on the mischiefs of a lawless caprice, which the soldiers could only gratify at the expense of their own blood, as their seditious elections had so frequently been followed by civil wars, which consumed the flower of the legions either in the field of battle or in the cruel abuse of victory. He painted in the most lively colours the exhausted state of the treasury, the desolation of the provinces, the disgrace of the Roman name, and the insolent triumph of rapacious barbarians. It was against those barbarians, he declared, that he intended to point the first effort of their arms. Tetricus might reign for a while over the West, and even Zenobia might preserve the

He under-
takes the
reformation
of the army.

the damnation of Gallienus.^a The senate decreed that his relations and servants should be thrown down headlong from the Gemonian stairs. An obnoxious officer of the revenue had his eyes torn out whilst under examination.

⁹ Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 26] p. 635 [ed. Paris; p. 604, ed. Bonn].

^a The expression is curious: "terram matrem deosque inferos precaretur, sedes impias uti Gallieno darent."—M.

dominion of the East.¹⁰ These usurpers were his personal adversaries, nor could he think of indulging any private resentment till he had saved an empire whose impending ruin would, unless it was timely prevented, crush both the army and the people.

The various nations of Germany and Sarmatia who fought under the Gothic standard had already collected an armament more formidable than any which had yet issued from the Euxine. On the banks of the Dniester, one of the great rivers that discharge themselves into that sea, they constructed a fleet of two thousand, or even of six thousand vessels;¹¹ numbers which, however incredible they may seem, would have been insufficient to transport their pretended army of three hundred and twenty thousand barbarians. Whatever might be the real strength of the Goths, the vigour and success of the expedition were not adequate to the greatness of the preparations. In their passage through the Bosphorus the unskilful pilots were overpowered by the violence of the current; and while the multitude of their ships were crowded in a narrow channel, many were dashed against each other or against the shore. The barbarians made several descents on the coasts both of Europe and Asia; but the open country was already plundered, and they were repulsed with shame and loss from the fortified cities which they assaulted. A spirit of discouragement and division arose in the fleet, and some of their chiefs sailed away towards the islands of Crete and Cyprus; but the main body, pursuing a more steady course, anchored at length near the foot of Mount Athos, and assaulted the city of Thessalonica, the wealthy capital of all the Macedonian provinces. Their attacks, in which they displayed a fierce but artless bravery, were soon interrupted by the rapid approach of Claudius, hastening to a scene of action that deserved the presence of a warlike prince at the head of the remaining powers of the empire. Impatient for battle, the Goths immediately broke up their camp, relinquished the siege of Thessalonica, left their navy at the foot of Mount Athos, traversed the hills of Macedonia, and pressed forwards to engage the last defence of Italy.

We still possess an original letter addressed by Claudius to the senate and people on this memorable occasion, "Conscript fathers," says the emperor, "know that three hundred and twenty thousand Goths have invaded the Roman territory. If

*Distress and
firmness of
Claudius.*

¹⁰ Zonaras on this occasion mentions Posthumus; but the registers of the senate (*Hist. August.* p. 203. [Pollio. Claud. c. 4.]) prove that Tetricus was already emperor of the western provinces.

¹¹ The *Augustan History* mentions the smaller, Zonaras the larger, number; the lively fancy of Montesquieu induced him to prefer the latter.

"I vanquish them, your gratitude will reward my services. Should I fall, remember that I am the successor of Gallienus. The whole republic is fatigued and exhausted. We shall fight after Valerian, after Ingenuus, Regillianus, Lollianus, Posthumus, Celsus, and a thousand others, whom a just contempt for Gallienus provoked into rebellion. We are in want of darts, of spears, and of shields. The strength of the empire, Gaul, and Spain, are usurped by Tetricus; and we blush to acknowledge that the archers of the East serve under the banners of Zenobia. Whatever we shall perform will be sufficiently great."¹² The melancholy firmness of this epistle announces a hero careless of his fate, conscious of his danger, but still deriving a well-grounded hope from the resources of his own mind.

The event surpassed his own expectations and those of the world. By the most signal victories he delivered the empire from this host of barbarians, and was distinguished by posterity ^{His victory over the Goths.} under the glorious appellation of the Gothic Claudius. The imperfect historians of an irregular war¹³ do not enable us to describe the order and circumstances of his exploits; but, if we could be indulged in the allusion, we might distribute into three acts this memorable tragedy. I. The decisive battle was fought near Naissus, a city of Dardania. The legions at first gave way, oppressed by numbers and dismayed by misfortunes. Their ruin was inevitable, had not the abilities of their emperor prepared a seasonable relief. A large detachment, rising out of the secret and difficult passes of the mountains, which by his order they had occupied, suddenly assailed the rear of the victorious Goths. The favourable instant was improved by the activity of Claudius. He revived the courage of his troops, restored their ranks, and pressed the barbarians on every side. Fifty thousand men are reported to have been slain in the battle of Naissus. Several large bodies of barbarians, covering their retreat with a moveable fortification of waggons, retired, or rather escaped, from the field of slaughter. II. We may presume that some insurmountable difficulty—the fatigue, perhaps, or the disobedience, of the conquerors—prevented Claudius from completing in one day the destruction of the Goths. The war was diffused over the provinces of Mæsia, Thrace, and Macedonia, and its operations drawn out into a variety of marches, surprises, and tumultuary engagements, as well

¹² Trebell. Pollio in Hist. August. p. 204. [Claud. c. 7.]

¹³ Hist. August. in Claud. Aurelian. et Prob. Zosimus, l. i. [c. 42–46] p. 38–42. Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 26], p. 636 [ed. Paris; p. 605, ed. Bonn]. Aurel. Victor in Epitom. Victor Junior in Cæsar. Eutrop. ix. 3. Euseb. in Chron. [An. CCLXXI.]

by sea as by land. When the Romans suffered any loss, it was commonly occasioned by their own cowardice or rashness; but the superior talents of the emperor, his perfect knowledge of the country, and his judicious choice of measures as well as officers, assured on most occasions the success of his arms. The immense booty, the fruit of so many victories, consisted for the greater part of cattle and slaves. A select body of the Gothic youth was received among the Imperial troops; the remainder was sold into servitude; and so considerable was the number of female captives that every soldier obtained to his share two or three women. A circumstance from which we may conclude that the invaders entertained some designs of settlement as well as of plunder; since even in a naval expedition they were accompanied by their families. III. The loss of their fleet, which was either taken or sunk, had intercepted the retreat of the Goths. A vast circle of Roman posts, distributed with skill, supported with firmness, and gradually closing towards a common centre, forced the barbarians into the most inaccessible parts of Mount Hæmus, where they found a safe refuge, but a very scanty subsistence. During the course of a rigorous winter, in which they were besieged by the emperor's troops, famine and pestilence, desertion and the sword, continually diminished the imprisoned multitude. On the

A.D. 270. return of spring nothing appeared in arms except a hardy and desperate band, the remnant of that mighty host which had embarked at the mouth of the Dniester.

The pestilence which swept away such numbers of the barbarians at length proved fatal to their conqueror. After a short but glorious reign of two years, Claudius expired at Sirmium, amidst the tears and acclamations of his subjects. In his last illness he convened the principal officers of the state and army, and in their presence recommended Aurelian,¹⁴ one of his generals, as the most deserving of the throne, and the best qualified to execute the great design which he himself had been permitted only to undertake. The virtues of Claudius, his valour, affability, justice, and temperance, his love of fame and of his country, place him in that short list of emperors who added lustre to the Roman purple. Those virtues, however, were celebrated with peculiar zeal and complacency by the courtly writers of the age of Constantine, who was the great-grandson of Crispus, the elder brother of Claudius. The voice of flattery was soon taught to repeat that the

¹⁴ According to Zonaras (l. xii. [c. 26] p. 636 [ed. Par.; p. 605, ed. Bonn]) Claudius, before his death, invested him with the purple; but this singular fact is rather contradicted than confirmed by other writers.

March.
Death of
the em-
peror, who
recommends
Aurelian
for his suc-
cessor.

gods, who so hastily had snatched Claudius from the earth, rewarded his merit and piety by the perpetual establishment of the empire in his family.¹⁵

Notwithstanding these oracles, the greatness of the Flavian family (a name which it had pleased them to assume) was deferred above twenty years, and the elevation of Claudius occasioned the immediate ruin of his brother Quintilius,^a who possessed not sufficient moderation or courage to descend into the private station to which the patriotism of the late emperor had condemned him. Without delay or reflection he assumed the purple at Aquileia, where he commanded a considerable force; and though his reign lasted only seventeen days,^b he had time to obtain the sanction of the senate and to experience a mutiny of the troops. As soon as he was informed that the great army of the Danube had invested the well-known valour of Aurelian with Imperial power, he sunk under the fame and merit of his rival; and, ordering his veins to be opened, prudently withdrew himself from the unequal contest.¹⁶

The attempt
and fall of
Quintilius.

April.

Origin and
services of
Aurelian.

The general design of this work will not permit us minutely to relate the actions of every emperor after he ascended the throne, much less to deduce the various fortunes of his private life. We shall only observe that the father of Aurelian was a peasant of the territory of Sirmium, who occupied a small farm, the property of Aurelius, a rich senator. His warlike son enlisted in the troops as a common soldier, successively rose to the rank of a centurion, a tribune, the præfect of a legion, the inspector of the camp, the general, or, as it was then called, the duke of a frontier; and at length, during the Gothic war, exercised the important office of commander-in-chief of the cavalry. In every station he distinguished himself by matchless valour,¹⁷ rigid discipline, and successful

¹⁵ See the Life of Claudius by Pollio, and the Orations of Mamertinus, Eumenius, and Julian. See likewise the Cæsars of Julian, p. 313. In Julian it was not adulation, but superstition and vanity.

¹⁶ Zosimus, l. i. [c. 47] p. 42. Pollio (Hist. August. p. 206 [Claud. c. 12]) allows him virtues, and says, that, like Pertinax, he was killed by the licentious soldiers. According to Dexippus, he died of a disease.^c

¹⁷ Theoclius (as quoted in the Augustan History, p. 211 [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 6]) affirms that in one day he killed with his own hand forty-eight Sarmatians, and in several subsequent engagements nine hundred and fifty. This heroic valour was admired by the soldiers, and celebrated in their rude songs, the burden of which was *mille, mille, mille, occidit*.

^a The ancient writers call him Quintillus, not Quintilius.—S.

^b Such is the narrative of the greater part of the older historians; but the number and the variety of his medals seem to require more time, and give probability to the report of Zosimus, who makes him

reign some months.—G.

^c The citation of Dexippus is not correct. The words of Pollio are, "It Dexippus quidem Claudium non dicit occisum, sed mortuum: *nec tamen addidit morbo, ut dubium sentire videatur*."—S.

conduct. He was invested with the consulship by the emperor Valerian, who styles him, in the pompous language of that age, the deliverer of Illyricum, the restorer of Gaul, and the rival of the Scipios. At the recommendation of Valerian, a senator of the highest rank and merit, Ulpius Crinitus, whose blood was derived from the same source as that of Trajan, adopted the Pannonian peasant, gave him his daughter in marriage, and relieved with his ample fortune the honourable poverty which Aurelian had preserved inviolate.¹⁸

The reign of Aurelian lasted only four years and about nine months; but every instant of that short period was filled by some memorable achievement. He put an end to the Gothic war, chastised the Germans who invaded Italy, recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain out of the hands of Tetricus, and destroyed the proud monarchy which Zenobia had erected in the East on the ruins of the afflicted empire.

It was the rigid attention of Aurelian even to the minutest articles of discipline which bestowed such uninterrupted success on his arms. His military regulations are contained in a very concise epistle to one of his inferior officers, who is commanded to enforce them, as he wishes to become a tribune, or as he is desirous to live. Gaming, drinking, and the arts of divination were severely prohibited. Aurelian expected that his soldiers should be modest, frugal, and laborious; that their armour should be constantly kept bright, their weapons sharp, their clothing and horses ready for immediate service; that they should live in their quarters with chastity and sobriety, without damaging the corn-fields, without stealing even a sheep, a fowl, or a bunch of grapes, without exacting from their landlords either salt, or oil, or wood. "The public allowance," continues the emperor, "is sufficient for their support; their wealth should be collected from the spoil of the enemy, not from the tears of the provincials."¹⁹ A single instance will serve to display the rigour, and even cruelty, of Aurelian. One of the soldiers had seduced the wife of his host. The guilty wretch was fastened to two trees forcibly drawn towards each other, and his limbs were torn asunder by their sudden separation. A few such examples impressed a salutary consternation. The punishments of Aurelian were terrible; but he had seldom occasion to punish more than once the same

¹⁸ Acholius (ap. Hist. August. p. 213 [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 13]) describes the ceremony of the adoption, as it was performed at Byzantium, in the presence of the emperor and his great officers.

¹⁹ Hist. August. p. 211. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 7.] This laconic epistle is truly the work of a soldier; it abounds with military phrases and words, some of which cannot be understood without difficulty. *Ferramenta sumpta* is well explained by Salmasius. The former of the words means all weapons of offence, and is contrasted with *Arma*, defensive armour. The latter signifies keen and well sharpened.

offence. His own conduct gave a sanction to his laws, and the seditious legions dreaded a chief who had learned to obey, and who was worthy to command.

The death of Claudius had revived the fainting spirit of the Goths. The troops which guarded the passes of Mount Hæmus and the banks of the Danube had been drawn away by the apprehension of a civil war; and it seems probable that the remaining body of the Gothic and Vandalic tribes embraced the favourable opportunity, abandoned their settlements of the Ukraine, traversed the rivers, and swelled with new multitudes the destroying host of their countrymen. Their united numbers were at length encountered by Aurelian, and the bloody and doubtful conflict ended only with the approach of night.²⁰ Exhausted by so many calamities, which they had mutually endured and inflicted during a twenty years' war, the Goths and the Romans consented to a lasting and beneficial treaty. It was earnestly solicited by the barbarians, and cheerfully ratified by the legions, to whose suffrage the prudence of Aurelian referred the decision of that important question. The Gothic nation engaged to supply the armies of Rome with a body of two thousand auxiliaries, consisting entirely of cavalry, and stipulated in return an undisturbed retreat, with a regular market as far as the Danube, provided by the emperor's care, but at their own expense. The treaty was observed with such religious fidelity, that, when a party of five hundred men straggled from the camp in quest of plunder, the king or general of the barbarians commanded that the guilty leader should be apprehended and shot to death with darts, as a victim devoted to the sanctity of their engagements.^a It is, however, not unlikely that the precaution of Aurelian, who had exacted as hostages the sons and daughters of the Gothic chiefs, contributed something to this pacific temper. The youths he trained in the exercise of arms, and near his own person; to the damsels he gave a liberal and Roman education, and, by bestowing them in marriage on some of his principal officers, gradually introduced between the two nations the closest and most endearing connections.²¹

He concludes a treaty with the Goths,

But the most important condition of peace was understood rather than expressed in the treaty. Aurelian withdrew the Roman forces

²⁰ Zosimus, l. i. [c. 48, p. 43] p. 45.

²¹ Dexippus (ap. *Excerpta Legat.* p. 12 [ed. Paris; p. 8, ed. Ven.; p. 10, ed. Bonn]) relates the whole transaction under the name of Vandals. Aurelian married one of the Gothic ladies to his general Bonosus, who was able to drink with the Goths and discover their secrets. *Hist. August.* p. 247. [*Vopisc. Bonosus*, c. 15.]

^a The five hundred stragglers were all slain.—M.

from Dacia, and tacitly relinquished that great province to the Goths and Vandals.²² His manly judgment convinced him of the solid advantages, and taught him to despise the seeming disgrace, of thus contracting the frontiers of the monarchy. The Dacian subjects, removed from those distant possessions which they were unable to cultivate or defend, added strength and populousness to the southern side of the Danube. A fertile territory, which the repetition of barbarous inroads had changed into a desert, was yielded to their industry, and a new province of Dacia still preserved the memory of Trajan's conquests. The old country of that name detained, however, a considerable number of its inhabitants, who dreaded exile more than a Gothic master.²³ These degenerate Romans continued to serve the empire, whose allegiance they had renounced, by introducing among their conquerors the first notions of agriculture, the useful arts, and the conveniences of civilised life. An intercourse of commerce and language was gradually established between the opposite banks of the Danube; and, after Dacia became an independent state, it often proved the firmest barrier of the empire against the invasions of the savages of the North. A sense of interest attached these more settled barbarians to the alliance of Rome, and a permanent interest very frequently ripens into sincere and useful friendship. This various colony, which filled the ancient province, and was insensibly blended into one great people, still acknowledged the superior renown and authority of the Gothic tribe, and claimed the fancied honour of a Scandinavian origin. At the same time the lucky, though accidental, resemblance of the name of Getæ^b infused among the credulous Goths a vain persuasion that, in a remote age, their own ancestors, already seated in the Dacian provinces, had received the instructions of Zamolxis, and checked the victorious arms of Sesostris and Darius.²⁴

²² Hist. August. p. 222. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 39.] Eutrop. ix. 15 [c. 9]. Sextus Rufus, c. 8. Lactantius de Mortibus Persecutorum, c. 9.

²³ The Wallachians still preserve many traces of the Latin language, and have boasted, in every age, of their Roman descent. They are surrounded by, but not mixed with, the barbarians. See a Memoir of M. d'Anville on ancient Dacia, in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.^a

²⁴ See the first chapter of Jornandes. The Vandals, however (c. 22), maintained a short independence between the rivers Marisia and Grissia (Maros and Keres [Körös]), which fell into the Theiss.

^a The Wallachian language not only preserves many traces of the Latin language, but is derived from it, like the Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and French. The "new province of Dacia," mentioned

by Gibbon, was called *Dacia Aureliani*, and was the district south of the Danube, lying between Upper and Lower Mesia.

—S. ^b See note on vol. i. p. 375.—S.

While the vigorous and moderate conduct of Aurelian restored the Illyrian frontier, the nation of the Alemanni²⁵ violated the conditions of peace which either Gallienus had purchased, or Claudius had imposed, and, inflamed by their impatient youth, suddenly flew to arms. Forty thousand horse appeared in the field,²⁶ and the numbers of the infantry doubled those of the cavalry.²⁷ The first objects of their avarice were a few cities of the Rætian frontier; but their hopes soon rising with success, the rapid march of the Alemanni traced a line of devastation from the Danube to the Po.²⁸

The emperor was almost at the same time informed of the irruption, and of the retreat, of the barbarians. Collecting an active body of troops, he marched with silence and celerity along the skirts of the Hercynian forest; and the Alemanni, laden with the spoils of Italy, arrived at the Danube, without suspecting that on the opposite bank, and in an advantageous post, a Roman army lay concealed and prepared to intercept their return. Aurelian indulged the fatal security of the barbarians, and permitted about half their forces to pass the river without disturbance and without precaution. Their situation and astonishment gave him an easy victory; his skilful conduct improved the advantage. Disposing the legions in a semicircular form, he advanced the two horns of the crescent across the Danube, and, wheeling them on a sudden towards the centre, enclosed the rear of the German host. The dismayed barbarians, on whatsoever side they cast their eyes, beheld with despair a wasted country, a deep and rapid stream, a victorious and implacable enemy.

Reduced to this distressed condition, the Alemanni no longer dared to sue for peace. Aurelian received their ambassadors at the head of his camp, and with every circumstance of martial pomp that could display the greatness and discipline of Rome. The legions stood to their arms in well-ordered ranks and awful silence. The principal commanders, distinguished by the ensigns of their rank, appeared on horseback on either side of the Imperial throne. Behind

²⁵ Dexippus, p. 7-12 [ed. Paris; p. 5, sqq. ed. Ven.; p. 11, sqq. ed. Bonn]. Zosimus, l. i. [c. 49] p. 43. Vopiscus in Aurelian. in Hist. August. However these historians differ in names (Alemanni, Juthungi, and Marcomanni), it is evident that they mean the same people and the same war; but it requires some care to conciliate and explain them.

²⁶ Cantoclarus, with his usual accuracy, chooses to translate three hundred thousand; his version is equally repugnant to sense and to grammar.

²⁷ We may remark, as an instance of bad taste, that Dexippus applies to the light infantry of the Alemanni the technical terms proper only to the Grecian phalanx.

²⁸ In Dexippus we at present read Rhodanus: M. de Valois very judiciously alters the word to Eridanus. [Niebuhr, in his edition of Dexippus (p. 19, ed. Bonn), keeps Rhodanus.—S.]

the throne the consecrated images of the emperor and his predecessors,²⁹ the golden eagles, and the various titles of the legions, engraved in letters of gold, were exalted in the air on lofty pikes covered with silver. When Aurelian assumed his seat, his manly grace and majestic figure³⁰ taught the barbarians to revere the person as well as the purple of their conqueror. The ambassadors fell prostrate on the ground in silence. They were commanded to rise, and permitted to speak. By the assistance of interpreters they extenuated their perfidy, magnified their exploits, expatiated on the vicissitudes of fortune and the advantages of peace, and, with an ill-timed confidence, demanded a large subsidy, as the price of the alliance which they offered to the Romans. The answer of the emperor was stern and imperious. He treated their offer with contempt, and their demand with indignation; reproached the barbarians that they were as ignorant of the arts of war as of the laws of peace; and finally dismissed them with the choice only of submitting to his unconditioned mercy, or awaiting the utmost severity of his resentment.³¹ Aurelian had resigned a distant province to the Goths; but it was dangerous to trust or to pardon these perfidious barbarians, whose formidable power kept Italy itself in perpetual alarms.

Immediately after this conference it should seem that some unexpected emergency required the emperor's presence in Pannonia. He devolved on his lieutenants the care of finishing the destruction of the Alemanni, either by the sword, or by the surer operation of famine. But an active despair has often triumphed over the indolent assurance of success. The barbarians, finding it impossible to traverse the Danube and the Roman camp, broke through the posts in their rear, which were more feebly or less carefully guarded; and with incredible diligence, but by a different road, returned towards the mountains of Italy.³² Aurelian, who considered the war as totally extinguished, received the mortifying intelligence of the escape of the Alemanni, and of the ravage which they already committed in the territory of Milan. The legions were commanded to follow, with as much expedition as those heavy bodies were capable of exerting, the rapid flight of an enemy, whose infantry and cavalry moved with almost equal swiftness. A few days afterwards the emperor himself marched to the relief of Italy, at the head of a chosen body of auxiliaries (among whom were the hostages and

²⁹ The emperor Claudius was certainly of the number; but we are ignorant how far this mark of respect was extended; if to Caesar and Augustus, it must have produced a very awful spectacle; a long line of the masters of the world.

³⁰ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 210. [Aurel. c. 6.]

³¹ Dexippus gives them a subtle and prolix oration, worthy of a Grecian sophist

³² Hist. August. p. 215. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 18.]

cavalry of the Vandals), and of all the Prætorian guards who had served in the wars on the Danube.³³

As the light troops of the Alemanni had spread themselves from the Alps to the Apennine, the incessant vigilance of Aurelian and his officers was exercised in the discovery, the attack, and the pursuit of the numerous detachments. Notwith-
and are at
last van-
quished by
Aurelian.
standing this desultory war, three considerable battles are mentioned, in which the principal force of both armies was obstinately engaged.³⁴ The success was various. In the first, fought near Placentia, the Romans received so severe a blow, that, according to the expression of a writer extremely partial to Aurelian, the immediate dissolution of the empire was apprehended.³⁵ The crafty barbarians, who had lined the woods, suddenly attacked the legions in the dusk of the evening, and, it is most probable, after the fatigue and disorder of a long march. The fury of their charge was irresistible; but at length, after a dreadful slaughter, the patient firmness of the emperor rallied his troops, and restored, in some degree, the honour of his arms. The second battle was fought near Fano in Umbria; on the spot which, five hundred years before, had been fatal to the brother of Hannibal.³⁶ Thus far the successful Germans had advanced along the Æmilian and Flaminian way, with a design of sacking the defenceless mistress of the world. But Aurelian, who, watchful for the safety of Rome, still hung on their rear, found in this place the decisive moment of giving them a total and irretrievable defeat.³⁷ The flying remnant of their host was exterminated in a third and last battle near Pavia; and Italy was delivered from the inroads of the Alemanni.

Fear has been the original parent of superstition, and every new calamity urges trembling mortals to deprecate the wrath
Supersti-
tious cere-
monies.
of their invisible enemies. Though the best hope of the republic was in the valour and conduct of Aurelian, yet such was the public consternation, when the barbarians were hourly expected at the gates of Rome, that, by a decree of the senate, the Sibylline books were consulted. Even the emperor himself, from a motive either of religion or of policy, recommended this salutary measure, chided the tardiness of the senate,³⁸ and offered to supply whatever expense, whatever animals, whatever captives of any nation, the gods

³³ Dexippus, p. 12 [ed. Paris; p. 8, ed. Ven.; p. 21, ed. Bonn].

³⁴ Victor Junior in Aurelian [Epit. 35, 2].

³⁵ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216. [Aurel. c. 21.]

³⁶ The little river, or rather torrent, of Metaurus, near Fano, has been immortalised by finding such an historian as Livy, and such a poet as Horace.

³⁷ It is recorded by an inscription found at Pesaro. See Gruter, cclxxvi. 3.

³⁸ One should imagine, he said, that you were assembled in a Christian church, not in the temple of all the gods.

should require. Notwithstanding this liberal offer, it does not appear that any human victims expiated with their blood the sins of the Roman people. The Sibylline books enjoined ceremonies of a more harmless nature—processions of priests in white robes, attended by a chorus of youths and virgins; lustrations of the city and adjacent country; and sacrifices, whose powerful influence disabled the barbarians from passing the mystic ground on which they had been celebrated. However puerile in themselves, these superstitious arts were subservient to the success of the war; and if, in the decisive battle of Fano, the Alemanni fancied they saw an army of spectres combating on the side of Aurelian, he received a real and effectual aid from this imaginary reinforcement.³⁹

But whatever confidence might be placed in ideal ramparts, the experience of the past, and the dread of the future, induced the Romans to construct fortifications of a grosser and more substantial kind. The seven hills of Rome had been surrounded, by the successors of Romulus, with an ancient wall of more than thirteen miles.⁴⁰ The vast enclosure may seem disproportioned to the strength and numbers of the infant state. But it was necessary to secure an ample extent of pasture and arable land against the frequent and sudden incursions of the tribes of Latium, the perpetual enemies of the republic. With the progress of Roman greatness, the city and its inhabitants gradually increased, filled up the vacant space, pierced through the useless walls, covered the field of Mars, and, on every side, followed the public highways in long and beautiful suburbs.⁴¹

³⁹ Vopiscus, in *Hist. August.* p. 215, 216 [Aurel. c. 18, 377.], gives a long account of these ceremonies from the registers of the senate.

⁴⁰ Plin. *Hist. Natur.* iii. 5 [§ 9].^a To confirm our idea, we may observe that for a long time Mount Caelius was a grove of oaks, and Mount Viminal was overrun with osiers; that in the fourth century the Aventine was a vacant and solitary retirement; that till the time of Augustus the Esquiline was an unwholesome burying-ground; and that the numerous inequalities remarked by the ancients in the Quirinal sufficiently prove that it was not covered with buildings. Of the seven hills, the Capitoline and Palatine only, with the adjacent valleys, were the primitive habitation of the Roman people. But this subject would require a dissertation.

⁴¹ *Exspatiatia tecta multas addidere urbes*, is the expression of Pliny.

^a This statement of Pliny is startling, since the walls of Servius did not exceed seven miles; and no new walls were built round the city till the time of Aurelian. But the explanation given by Bunsen of this passage of Pliny is beyond doubt the true one, and has been accepted by the best modern scholars. We know that the city had long outgrown its original limits, and that the fourteen regions into which it was divided by Augustus embraced a considerable space outside the city walls. Now Bunsen

supposes that the measurement of Pliny refers to the circumference of the city as divided into the fourteen regions, not of the city as marked by its ancient walls. There is, therefore, no occasion to resort to the unsatisfactory expedient of altering the numbers of Pliny, as Gibbon did in a subsequent part of this work, when he saw the necessity of reducing the measurement of the city. Ch. xli. note 77. See Bunsen, *Beschreibung der Stadt Rom.*, vol. i. p. 192, seq.; Becker, *de Roma veteris Muris*, p. 109, seq.—S.

The extent of the new walls, erected by Aurelian, and finished in the reign of Probus, was magnified by popular estimation to near fifty,⁴² but is reduced by accurate measurement to about twenty-one miles.^{43a} It was a great but a melancholy labour, since the defence of the capital betrayed the decline of the monarchy. The Romans of a more prosperous age, who trusted to the arms of the legions the safety of the frontier camps,⁴⁴ were very far from entertaining a suspicion that it would ever become necessary to fortify the seat of empire against the inroads of the barbarians.⁴⁵

The victory of Claudius over the Goths, and the success of Aurelian against the Alemanni, had already restored to the arms of Rome their ancient superiority over the barbarous nations of the North. To chastise domestic tyrants, and to reunite the dismembered parts of the empire, was a task reserved for the second of those warlike emperors. Though he was acknowledged by the senate and people, the frontiers of Italy, Africa, Illyricum, and Thrace, confined the limits of his reign. Gaul, Spain, and Britain, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, were still possessed by two rebels, who alone, out of so numerous a list, had hitherto escaped the dangers of their situation; and to complete the ignominy of Rome, these rival thrones had been usurped by women.

A rapid succession of monarchs had arisen and fallen in the provinces of Gaul. The rigid virtues of Posthumus served only to hasten his destruction. After suppressing a com-

Aurelian suppresses the two usurpers.

Succession of usurpers in Gaul.

⁴² Hist. August. p. 222. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 39.] Both Lipsius and Isaac Vossius have eagerly embraced this measure.

⁴³ See Nardini, Roma Antica, l. i. c. 8.

⁴⁴ Tacit. Hist. iv. 23.

⁴⁵ For Aurelian's walls, see Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216, 222. [Aurel. c. 21 and 39.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 49] p. 43. Eutropius, ix. 15 [9]. Aurel. Victor in Aurelian. Victor Junior in Aurelian. Euseb. Hieronym. et Idatius in Chronio.

^a Neither of these numbers can be admitted. The walls which surround the modern city of Rome are, with the exception of the part beyond the Tiber, essentially the same as those of Aurelian. The latter were restored by Honorius, as we learn from an inscription on the walls now extant; and the walls of Honorius are universally allowed to be those which we see at present. Now these walls measure between twelve and thirteen miles, and, excluding the additions by the Popes, between eleven and twelve. Not only must we therefore reject the incredible number of fifty miles, but even the less startling number of twenty-one. The former of these two numbers rests on the authority of Vopiscus, who says, "Muros urbis Romæ sic ampliavit, ut quinquaginta prope millia murorum ejus

ambitus teneant." It has been ingeniously conjectured by Becker that in this passage we ought to understand *pedum*, not *passuum*, after the *millia*, which would give ten Roman miles for the circuit, a measurement very near the truth. The measurement of twenty-one miles rests upon the authority of Olympiodorus, who says that the walls of Honorius, as measured by the geometer Ammon, just before the siege of the city by Alaric, were twenty-one miles in circumference (Olympiod. ap. Photium, Bibl. 80, p. 63, ed. Bekker). Here it is proposed to read *ad* (11) instead of *ad* (21), but this arbitrary alteration of numbers is always unsatisfactory. See Becker, de Romæ veteris Muris, p. 109, seq.; Bunbury on the Topography of Rome, in the Classicum Museum, vol. iii. p. 367.—E.

petitor who had assumed the purple at Mentz, he refused to gratify his troops with the plunder of the rebellious city; and, in

A.D. 258-265.

the seventh year of his reign, became the victim of their disappointed avarice.⁴⁶ The death of Victorinus, his friend and associate, was occasioned by a less worthy cause. The shining accomplishments⁴⁷ of that prince were stained by a licentious passion, which he indulged in acts of violence, with too little regard to the laws of society, or even to those of love.⁴⁸ He was slain at Cologne, by a

A.D. 267.

conspiracy of jealous husbands, whose revenge would have appeared more justifiable, had they spared the innocence of his son. After the murder of so many valiant princes, it is somewhat remarkable, that a female for a long time controlled the fierce legions of Gaul, and still more singular that she was the mother of the unfortunate Victorinus. The arts and treasures of Victoria enabled her successively to place Marius and Tetricus on the throne, and to reign with a manly vigour under the name of those dependent emperors. Money of copper, of silver, and of gold, was coined in her name; she assumed the titles of Augusta and Mother of the Camps: her power ended only with her life; but her life was perhaps shortened by the ingratitude of Tetricus.⁴⁹

When, at the instigation of his ambitious patroness, Tetricus assumed the ensigns of royalty, he was governor of the peaceful province of Aquitaine, an employment suited to his character and education. He reigned four or five years over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, the slave and sovereign of a licentious army, whom he dreaded, and by whom he was despised. The valour and fortune of Aurelian at length opened the prospect of a deliverance.

The reign
and defeat
of Tetricus.

A.D. 271.
Summer.

He ventured to disclose his melancholy situation, and conjured the emperor to hasten to the relief of his unhappy rival. Had this secret correspondence reached the ears of the

⁴⁶ His competitor was Lollianus,^a or Ælianus, if, indeed, these names mean the same person. See Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 1177.

⁴⁷ The character of this prince by Julius Aterianus (ap. Hist. August. p. 187 [Pollio, xxx. Tyranni, c. 5]) is worth transcribing, as it seems fair and impartial. Victorino, qui post Junium Posthumium Gallias rexit, neminem existimo præferendum; non in virtute Trajanum; non Antoninum in clementia: non in gravitate Nervam; non in gubernando ærario Vespasianum; non in censura totius vitæ ac severitate militari Pertinacem vel Severum. Sed omnia hæc libido et cupiditas voluptatis mulierariæ sic perdidit, ut nemo audeat virtutes ejus in literas mittere quem constat omnium judicio meruisse puniri.

⁴⁸ He ravished the wife of Attitianus, an *actuary*, or army agent. Hist. August. p. 186. [Pollio, l. c.] Aurel. Victor in Aurelian.

⁴⁹ Pollio assigns her an article among the thirty tyrants. Hist. August. p. 200. [xxx. Tyranni, c. 30.]

^a The medals which bear the name of Lollianus are considered forgeries, except one in the museum of the Prince of Waldeck: there are many extant bearing the

name of Lælianus, which appears to have been that of the competitor of Posthumus. Eckhel, Doct. Num. t. vii. p. 449.—G.

soldiers, it would most probably have cost Tetricus his life; nor could he resign the sceptre of the West without committing an act of treason against himself. He affected the appearances of a civil war, led his forces into the field against Aurelian, posted them in the most disadvantageous manner, betrayed his own counsels to the enemy, and with a few chosen friends deserted in the beginning of the action. The rebel legions, though disordered and dismayed by the unexpected treachery of their chief, defended themselves with desperate valour, till they were cut in pieces almost to a man, in this bloody and memorable battle, which was fought near Châlons in Champagne.⁵⁰ The retreat of the irregular auxiliaries, Franks and Batavians,⁵¹ whom the conqueror soon compelled or persuaded to repass the Rhine, restored the general tranquillity, and the power of Aurelian was acknowledged from the wall of Antoninus to the Columns of Hercules.

As early as the reign of Claudius, the city of Autun, alone and unassisted, had ventured to declare against the legions of Gaul. After a siege of seven months they stormed and plundered that unfortunate city, already wasted by famine.⁵² Lyons, on the contrary, had resisted with obstinate disaffection the arms of Aurelian. We read of the punishment of Lyons,⁵³ but there is not any mention of the rewards of Autun. Such, indeed, is the policy of civil war: severely to remember injuries, and to forget the most important services. Revenge is profitable, gratitude is expensive.

Aurelian had no sooner secured the person and provinces of Tetricus than he turned his arms against Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East. Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of empire; nor is our own age destitute of such distinguished characters. But if we except the doubtful achievements of Semiramis, Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia.⁵⁴ She claimed her descent

A.D. 272.
Character of
Zenobia;

⁵⁰ Pollio in Hist. August. p. 196. [xxx. Tyranni, c. 23.] Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220. [Aurel. c. 32.] The two Victors, in the lives of Gallienus and Aurelian. Eutrop. ix. 13 [c. 9]. Euseb. in Chron. Of all these writers, only the two last (but with strong probability) place the fall of Tetricus before that of Zenobia. M. de Boze (in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.) does not wish, and Tillemont (tom. iii. p. 1189) does not dare, to follow them. I have been fairer than the one, and bolder than the other. [Clinton places the fall of Tetricus after that of Zenobia, in 274.—S.]

⁵¹ Victor Junior in Aurelian. Eumenius mentions *Batavica*; some critics, without any reason, would fain alter the word to *Bagaudica*.

⁵² Eumen. in Vet. Panegyr. iv. 8.

⁵³ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246 [in Proculo, c. 13]. Autun was not restored till the reign of Diocletian. See Eumenius de restaurandis scholis.

⁵⁴ Almost everything that is said of the manners of Odenathus and Zenobia is taken from their Lives in the Augustan History, by Trebellius Pollio: see p. 192, 198 [xxx. Tyranni, c. 14 and 29.]

from the Macedonian kings of Egypt,^a equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity⁵⁵ and valour.

her beauty
and learn-
ing; Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex. She was of a dark complexion (for in speaking of a lady these trifles become important). Her teeth were of a pearly whiteness, and her large black eyes sparkled with uncommon fire, tempered by the most attractive sweetness. Her voice was strong and harmonious. Her manly understanding was strengthened and adorned by study. She was not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but possessed in equal perfection the Greek, the Syriac, and the Egyptian languages. She had drawn up for her own use an epitome of oriental history, and familiarly compared the beauties of Homer and Plato under the tuition of the sublime Longinus.

This accomplished woman gave her hand to Odenathus,^b who, her valour. from a private station, raised himself to the dominion of the East. She soon became the friend and companion of a hero. In the intervals of war Odenathus passionately delighted in the exercise of hunting; he pursued with ardour the wild beasts of the desert, lions, panthers, and bears; and the ardour of Zenobia in that dangerous amusement was not inferior to his own. She had inured her constitution to fatigue, disdained the use of a covered carriage, generally appeared on horseback in a military habit, and sometimes marched several miles on foot at the head of the troops. The success of Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her incomparable prudence and fortitude. Their splendid victories over the Great King, whom they twice pursued as far as the gates of Ctesiphon, laid the foundations of their united fame and power. The armies which they commanded, and the provinces which they had saved, acknowledged not any other sovereigns than their invincible chiefs. The senate and people of Rome revered a stranger who had avenged their captive emperor, and even the insensible son of Valerian accepted Odenathus for his legitimate colleague.

After a successful expedition against the Gothic plunderers of Asia, the Palmyrenian prince returned to the city of Emesa in Syria. She revenges
her husband's
death, Invincible in war, he was there cut off by domestic treason, and his favourite amusement of hunting was the cause, or at least the occasion, of his death.⁵⁶ His nephew, Mæonius,

⁵⁵ She never admitted her husband's embraces but for the sake of posterity. If her hopes were baffled, in the ensuing *month* she reiterated the experiment.

⁵⁶ Hist. August. p. 192, 193. [Pollio, xxx. Tyranni, c. 14.] Zosimus, l. i [c. 39] p.

^a According to some Christian writers Zenobia was a Jewess. (Jost, Geschichte der Israel, iv. p. 166. Hist. of Jews, iii. p. 175.)—M.

^b According to Zosimus, Odenathus was

of a noble family in Palmyra; and, according to Procopius [Bell. Pers. l. ii. c. 5], he was prince of the Saracens who inhabit the banks of the Euphrates. Eckhel. Doct. Num. vii. p. 489.—G.

presumed to dart his javelin before that of his uncle; and, though admonished of his error, repeated the same insolence. As a monarch, and as a sportsman, Odenathus was provoked, took away his horse, a mark of ignominy among the barbarians, and chastised the rash youth by a short confinement. The offence was soon forgot, but the punishment was remembered; and Mæonius, with a few daring associates, assassinated his uncle in the midst of a great entertainment. Herod, the son of Odenathus, though not of ^{A.D. 267,} Zenobia, a young man of a soft and effeminate temper,⁵⁷ was killed with his father. But Mæonius obtained only the pleasure of revenge by this bloody deed. He had scarcely time to assume the title of Augustus before he was sacrificed by Zenobia to the memory of her husband.⁵⁸

With the assistance of his most faithful friends, she immediately filled the vacant throne, and governed with manly counsels Palmyra, Syria, and the East, above five years. By the death of Odenathus, that authority was at an end which the senate had granted him only as a personal distinction; but his martial widow, disdaining both the senate and Gallienus, obliged one of the Roman generals who was sent against her to retreat into Europe, with the loss of his army and his reputation.⁵⁹ Instead of the little passions which so frequently perplex a female reign, the steady administration of Zenobia was guided by the most judicious maxims of policy. If it was expedient to pardon, she could calm her resentment; if it was necessary to punish, she could impose silence on the voice of pity. Her strict economy was accused of avarice; yet on every proper occasion she appeared magnificent and liberal. The neighbouring states of Arabia, Armenia, and Persia, dreaded her enmity, and solicited her alliance. To the dominions of Odenathus, which extended from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Bithynia, his widow added the inheritance of her ancestors, the populous and fertile kingdom of Egypt.⁶⁰ The emperor Claudius acknowledged

and reigns
over the
East and
Egypt.

36. Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 24] p. 633 [ed. Paris; p. 600, ed. Bonn]. The last is clear and probable, the others confused and inconsistent. The text of Syncellus, if not corrupt, is absolute nonsense.

⁵⁷ Odenathus and Zenobia often sent him, from the spoils of the enemy, presents of gems and toys, which he received with infinite delight.

⁵⁸ Some very unjust suspicions have been cast on Zenobia, as if she was accessory to her husband's death.

⁵⁹ Hist. August. p. 180, 181. [Pollio, Gallieni II. c. 13.]

⁶⁰ See in Hist. August. p. 198 [Pollio, xxx. Tyranni, c. 29], Aurelian's testimony to her merit; and for the conquest of Egypt, Zosimus, l. i. [c. 44] p. 39, 40.

* This seems very doubtful: Claudius, during all his reign, is represented as emperor on the medals of Alexandria, which are very numerous. If Zenobia possessed any power in Egypt, it could only have been at the beginning of the

reign of Aurelian. The same circumstance throws great improbability on her conquests in Galatia. Perhaps Zenobia administered Egypt in the name of Claudius, and, emboldened by the death of that prince, subjected it to her own power.—G.

her merit, and was content that, while *he* pursued the Gothic war, *she* should assert the dignity of the empire in the East. The conduct, however, of Zenobia was attended with some ambiguity; nor is it unlikely that she had conceived the design of erecting an independent and hostile monarchy. She blended with the popular manners of Roman princes the stately pomp of the courts of Asia, and exacted from her subjects the same adoration that was paid to the successors of Cyrus. She bestowed on her three sons⁶¹ a Latin education, and often showed them to the troops adorned with the Imperial purple. For herself she reserved the diadem, with the splendid but doubtful title of Queen of the East.

When Aurelian passed over into Asia, against an adversary whose sex alone could render her an object of contempt, his presence restored obedience to the province of Bithynia, already shaken by the arms and intrigues of Zenobia.⁶²

Advancing at the head of his legions, he accepted the submission of Ancyra, and was admitted into Tyana, after an obstinate siege, by the help of a perfidious citizen. The generous though fierce temper of Aurelian abandoned the traitor to the rage of the soldiers: a superstitious reverence induced him to treat with lenity the countrymen of Apollonius the philosopher.⁶³ Antioch was deserted on his approach, till the emperor, by his salutary edicts, recalled the fugitives, and granted a general pardon to all who, from necessity rather than choice, had been engaged in the service of the Palmyrenian queen. The unexpected mildness of such a conduct reconciled the minds of the Syrians, and, as far as the gates of Emesa, the wishes of the people seconded the terror of his arms.⁶⁴

Zenobia would have ill deserved her reputation, had she indolently permitted the emperor of the West to approach within an hundred miles of her capital. The fate of the East was decided in two great battles; so similar in almost every circumstance, that we can scarcely distinguish them from each other, except by observing that the first was fought

The emperor defeats the Palmyrenians in the battles of Antioch and Emesa.

⁶¹ Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vabalathus.^a It is supposed that the two former were already dead before the war. On the last, Aurelian bestowed a small province of Armenia, with the title of King; several of his medals are still extant. See Tillamont, tom. iii. p. 1190.

⁶² Zosimus, l. i. [c. 50] p. 44.
⁶³ Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217 [Aurel. c. 23, seq.]) gives us an authentic letter, and a doubtful vision, of Aurelian. Apollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life (that of the former) is related in so fabulous a manner by his disciples, that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage, an impostor, or a fanatic.

⁶⁴ Zosimus, l. i. [c. 54] p. 46.

^a Vopiscus asserts (Aurel. c. 38) that Zenobia governed as regent for her son Balbatus (i. e. Vabalathus), and not for Timolaus and Herennianus, which is the statement of Trebellius Pollio, xxx. Tyranni, c. 29. There are no medals

extant either of Herennianus or Timolaus, while there are several of Vabalathus, bearing the effigies and titles of Aurelian on the reverse. Eckhel, vol. vii. p. 491, seq.; Clinton, Fasti Rom. vol. i. p. 306 —S.

near Ant.och,⁶⁵ and the second near Emesa.⁶⁶ In both the queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence, and devolved the execution of her orders on Zabdas, who had already signalised his military talents by the conquest of Egypt. The numerous forces of Zenobia consisted for the most part of light archers, and of heavy cavalry clothed in complete steel. The Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian were unable to sustain the ponderous charge of their antagonists. They fled in real or affected disorder, engaged the Palmyrenians in a laborious pursuit, harassed them by a desultory combat, and at length discomfited this impenetrable but unwieldy body of cavalry. The light infantry, in the mean time, when they had exhausted their quivers, remaining without protection against a closer onset, exposed their naked sides to the swords of the legions. Aurelian had chosen these veteran troops who were usually stationed on the Upper Danube, and whose valour had been severely tried in the Alemannic war.⁶⁷ After the defeat of Emesa, Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. As far as the frontier of Egypt, the nations subject to her empire had joined the standard of the conqueror, who detached Probus, the bravest of his generals, to possess himself of the Egyptian provinces. Palmyra was the last resource of the widow of Odenathus. She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared, with the intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same.

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean. Even the name of Tadmor, ^{The state of Palmyra.} or Palmyra, by its signification in the Syriac as well as in the Latin language, denoted the multitude of palm-trees which afforded shade and verdure to that temperate region. The air was pure, and the soil, watered by some invaluable springs, was capable of producing fruits as well as corn. A place possessed of such singular advantages, and situated at a convenient distance⁶⁸ between the Gulf of Persia and the Mediterranean, was soon frequented by

⁶⁵ At a place called Imma. Eutropius, Sextus Rufus, and Jerome, mention only this first battle.

⁶⁶ Vopiscus, in *Hist. August.* p. 217 [Aurel. c. 25], mentions only the second.

⁶⁷ Zosimus, l. i. [c. 50, *sqq.*] p. 44-48. His account of the two battles is clear and circumstantial.

⁶⁸ It was five hundred and thirty-seven miles from Seleucia, and two hundred and three from the nearest coast of Syria, according to the reckoning of Pliny, who, in a few words (*Hist. Natur.* v. 25), gives an excellent description of Palmyra.^a

^a Tadmor, or Palmyra, was probably at a very early period the connecting link between the commerce of Tyre and Babylon. Heeren, *Ideen*, v. i. p. ii. p. 125. Tadmor was probably built by Solomon as a commercial station. *Hist. of Jews*, i. p. 271.—M.

the caravans which conveyed to the nations of Europe a considerable part of the rich commodities of India. Palmyra insensibly increased into an opulent and independent city, and, connecting the Roman and the Parthian monarchies by the mutual benefits of commerce, was suffered to observe an humble neutrality, till at length, after the victories of Trajan, the little republic sunk into the bosom of Rome, and flourished more than one hundred and fifty years in the subordinate though honourable rank of a colony. It was during that peaceful period, if we may judge from a few remaining inscriptions, that the wealthy Palmyrenians constructed those temples, palaces, and porticos of Grecian architecture, whose ruins, scattered over an extent of several miles, have deserved the curiosity of our travellers. The elevation of Odenathus and Zenobia appeared to reflect new splendour on their country, and Palmyra, for a while, stood forth the rival of Rome: but the competition was fatal, and ages of prosperity were sacrificed to a moment of glory.⁶⁹

In his march over the sandy desert between Emesa and Palmyra, the emperor Aurelian was perpetually harassed by the
It is besieged by Aurelian, Arabs; nor could he always defend his army, and especially his baggage, from those flying troops of active and daring robbers, who watched the moment of surprise, and eluded the slow pursuit of the legions. The siege of Palmyra was an object far more difficult and important, and the emperor, who, with incessant vigour, pressed the attacks in person, was himself wounded with a dart. "The Roman people," says Aurelian, in an original letter, "speak with contempt of the war which I am waging against a woman. They are ignorant both of the character and of the power of Zenobia. It is impossible to enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones, of arrows, and of every species of missile weapons. Every part of the walls is provided with two or three *balistæ*, and artificial fires are thrown from her military engines. The fear of punishment has armed her with a desperate courage. Yet still I trust in the protecting deities of Rome, who have hitherto been favourable to all my undertakings."⁷⁰ Doubtful, however, of the protection of the gods, and of the event of the siege, Aurelian judged it more prudent to offer terms of an advantageous capitulation; to the queen, a splendid retreat; to the citizens, their ancient privileges. His proposals were obstinately rejected, and the refusal was accompanied with insult,

⁶⁹ Some English travellers from Aleppo discovered the ruins of Palmyra about the end of the last century. Our curiosity has since been gratified in a more splendid manner by Messieurs Wood and Dawkins. For the history of Palmyra we may consult the masterly dissertation of Dr. Halley in the *Philosophical Transactions* Lowthorp's Abridgment, vol. iii. p. 518.

⁷⁰ Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 218. [Aurel. c. 26.]

The firmness of Zenobia was supported by the hope that in a very short time famine would compel the Roman army to repass the desert; and by the reasonable expectation that the kings of the East, and particularly the Persian monarch, would arm in the defence of their most natural ally. But fortune and the perseverance of Aurelian overcame every obstacle. The death of Sapor, which happened about this time,⁷¹ distracted the councils of Persia, and the inconsiderable succours that attempted to relieve Palmyra were easily intercepted either by the arms or the liberality of the emperor. From every part of Syria a regular succession of convoys safely arrived in the camp, which was increased by the return of Probus with his victorious troops from the conquest of Egypt. It was then that Zenobia resolved to fly. She mounted the fleetest of her dromedaries,⁷² and had already reached the banks of the Euphrates, about sixty miles from Palmyra, when she was overtaken by the pursuit of Aurelian's light horse, seized and brought back a captive to the feet of the emperor. Her capital soon afterwards surrendered, and was treated with unexpected lenity. The arms, horses, and camels, with an immense treasure of gold, silver, silk, and precious stones, were all delivered to the conqueror, who, leaving only a garrison of six hundred archers, returned to Emesa, and employed some time in the distribution of rewards and punishments at the end of so memorable a war, which restored to the obedience of Rome those provinces that had renounced their allegiance since the captivity of Valerian.

who becomes
master of
Zenobia
and of the
city.

A.D. 273.

When the Syrian queen was brought into the presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, How she had presumed to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome? The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness. "Because I dis-
"dained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a Gallienus.
"You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign."⁷³ But as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial; she trembled at the angry clamours of the soldiers, who called aloud for her immediate execution, forgot the generous despair of Cleopatra, which she had proposed as her model, and ignominiously

Behaviour
of Zenobia.

⁷¹ From a very doubtful chronology I have endeavoured to extract the most probable date.

⁷² Hist. August. p. 218. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 28.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 55] p. 50. Though the camel is a heavy beast of burden, the dromedary, which is either of the same or of a kindred species, is used by the natives of Asia and Africa on all occasions which require celerity. The Arabs affirm that he will run over as much ground in one day as their fleetest horses can perform in eight or ten. See Buffon, Hist. Naturelle, tom. xi. p. 222; and Shaw's Travels, p. 167.

⁷³ Pollio in Hist. August. p. 199. [xxx. Tyranni, de Zenobia, c. 29.]

purchased life by the sacrifice of her fame and her friends. It was to their counsels, which governed the weakness of her sex, that she imputed the guilt of her obstinate resistance; it was on their heads that she directed the vengeance of the cruel Aurelian. The fame of Longinus, who was included among the numerous and perhaps innocent victims of her fear, will survive that of the queen who betrayed, or the tyrant who condemned him. Genius and learning were incapable of moving a fierce unlettered soldier, but they had served to elevate and harmonise the soul of Longinus. Without uttering a complaint, he calmly followed the executioner, pitying his unhappy mistress, and bestowing comfort on his afflicted friends.⁷⁴

Returning from the conquest of the East, Aurelian had already crossed the Straights which divide Europe from Asia, when he was provoked by the intelligence that the Palmyrenians had massacred the governor and garrison which he had left among them, and again erected the standard of revolt. Without a moment's deliberation, he once more turned his face towards Syria. Antioch was alarmed by his rapid approach, and the helpless city of Palmyra felt the irresistible weight of his resentment. We have a letter of Aurelian himself, in which he acknowledges⁷⁵ that old men, women, children, and peasants, had been involved in that dreadful execution, which should have been confined to armed rebellion; and although his principal concern seems directed to the re-establishment of a temple of the Sun, he discovers some pity for the remnant of the Palmyrenians, to whom he grants the permission of rebuilding and inhabiting their city. But it is easier to destroy than to restore. The seat of commerce, of arts, and of Zenobia, gradually sunk into an obscure town, a trifling fortress, and at length a miserable village. The present citizens of Palmyra, consisting of thirty or forty families, have erected their mud-cottages within the spacious court of a magnificent temple.

Another and a last labour still awaited the indefatigable Aurelian; to suppress a dangerous though obscure rebel, who, during the revolt of Palmyra, had arisen on the banks of the Nile. Firmus, the friend and ally, as he proudly styled himself, of Odenathus and Zenobia, was no more than a wealthy merchant of Egypt. In the course of his trade to India he had formed very intimate connexions with the Saracens and the Blemmyes, whose situation, on either coast of the Red Sea, gave them an easy introduction into the Upper Egypt. The Egyptians he inflamed with the hope of freedom, and, at the head of their furious multitude,

Aurelian
suppresses
the rebellion
of Firmus
in Egypt.

⁷⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 219. [Aurel. c. 30.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 56, p. 49] p. 51

⁷⁵ Hist. August. p. 219. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 31.]

broke into the city of Alexandria, where he assumed the Imperial purple, coined money, published edicts, and raised an army, which, as he vainly boasted, he was capable of maintaining from the sole profits of his paper trade. Such troops were a feeble defence against the approach of Aurelian; and it seems almost unnecessary to relate that Firmus was routed, taken, tortured, and put to death.⁷⁶ Aurelian might now congratulate the senate, the people, and himself, that, in little more than three years, he had restored universal peace and order to the Roman world.

Since the foundation of Rome no general had more nobly deserved a triumph than Aurelian; nor was a triumph ever celebrated with superior pride and magnificence.⁷⁷ The pomp was opened by twenty elephants, four royal tigers, and above two hundred of the most curious animals from every climate of the North, the East, and the South. They were followed by sixteen hundred gladiators, devoted to the cruel amusement of the amphitheatre. The wealth of Asia, the arms and ensigns of so many conquered nations, and the magnificent plate and wardrobe of the Syrian queen, were disposed in exact symmetry or artful disorder. The ambassadors of the most remote parts of the earth, of Æthiopia, Arabia, Persia, Bactriana, India, and China, all remarkable by their rich or singular dresses, displayed the fame and power of the Roman emperor, who exposed likewise to the public view the presents that he had received, and particularly a great number of crowns of gold, the offerings of grateful cities. The victories of Aurelian were attested by the long train of captives who reluctantly attended his triumph—Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, and Egyptians. Each people was distinguished by its peculiar inscription, and the title of Amazons was bestowed on ten martial heroines of the Gothic nation who had been taken in arms.⁷⁸ But every eye, disregarding the crowd of captives, was fixed on the emperor Tetricus

⁷⁶ See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220, 242. [Aurel. c. 32; Firmus, c. 2.] As an instance of luxury, it is observed that he had glass windows. He was remarkable for his strength and appetite, his courage and dexterity. From the letter of Aurelian we may justly infer that Firmus was the last of the rebels, and consequently that Tetricus was already suppressed.

⁷⁷ See the triumph of Aurelian, described by Vopiscus. He relates the particulars with his usual minuteness; and on this occasion they happen to be interesting. Hist. August. p. 220. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 33, *seq.*]

⁷⁸ Among barbarous nations women have often combated by the side of their husbands. But it is almost impossible that a society of Amazons should ever have existed either in the old or new world.^a

^a Klaproth's theory on the origin of such traditions is at least recommended by its ingenuity. The males of a tribe having gone out on a marauding expedition, and having been cut off to a man,

the females may have endeavoured, for a time, to maintain their independence in their camp or village till their children grew up. Travels, ch. xxx. Eng. trans. —M.

and the queen of the East. The former, as well as his son, whom he had created Augustus, was dressed in Gallic trowsers,⁷⁹ a saffron tunic, and a robe of purple. The beauteous figure of Zenobia was confined by fetters of gold; a slave supported the gold chain which encircled her neck, and she almost fainted under the intolerable weight of jewels. She preceded on foot the magnificent chariot in which she once hoped to enter the gates of Rome. It was followed by two other chariots, still more sumptuous, of Odenathus and of the Persian monarch. The triumphal car of Aurelian (it had formerly been used by a Gothic king) was drawn, on this memorable occasion, either by four stags or by four elephants.⁸⁰ The most illustrious of the senate, the people, and the army closed the solemn procession. Unfeigned joy, wonder, and gratitude swelled the acclamations of the multitude; but the satisfaction of the senate was clouded by the appearance of Tetricus; nor could they suppress a rising murmur that the haughty emperor should thus expose to public ignominy the person of a Roman and a magistrate.⁸¹

But, however in the treatment of his unfortunate rivals Aurelian might indulge his pride, he behaved towards them with a generous clemency which was seldom exercised by the ancient conquerors. Princes who, without success, had defended their throne or freedom, were frequently strangled in prison as soon as the triumphal pomp ascended the Capitol. These usurpers, whom their defeat had convicted of the crime of treason, were permitted to spend their lives in affluence and honourable repose. The emperor presented Zenobia with an elegant villa at Tibur or Tivoli, about twenty miles from the capital; the Syrian queen insensibly sunk into a Roman matron, her daughters married into noble families, and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century.⁸² Tetricus and his son were reinstated in their rank and fortunes. They erected on the Cælian hill a magnificent palace, and, as soon as it was finished,

⁷⁹ The use of *braccæ*, breeches, or trowsers, was still considered in Italy as a Gallic and barbarian fashion. The Romans, however, had made great advances towards it. To encircle the legs and thighs with *fasciæ*, or bands, was understood, in the time of Pompey and Horace, to be a proof of ill health or effeminacy. In the age of Trajan the custom was confined to the rich and luxurious. It gradually was adopted by the meanest of the people. See a very curious note of Casaubon, ad Sueton. in August. c. 82.

⁸⁰ Most probably the former; the latter, seen on the medals of Aurelian, only denote (according to the learned Cardinal Norris) an oriental victory.

⁸¹ The expression of Calpurnius (Eclog. i. 50), *Nullos duceat captiva triumphos*, as applied to Rome, contains a very manifest allusion and censure.^a

⁸² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 199. [xxx. Tyranni, Zenobia, c. 29.] Hieronym. in Chron. Prosper in Chron. Baronius supposes that Zenobius, bishop of Florence in the time of St. Ambrose, was of her family.

^a Although Gibbon quotes Calpurnius his date is quite uncertain. Smith's Dict as a contemporary (see below, note 93), of Biogr. vol. i. p. 582.—S.

invited Aurelian to supper. On his entrance he was agreeably surprised with a picture which represented their singular history. They were delineated offering to the emperor a civic crown and the sceptre of Gaul, and again receiving at his hands the ornaments of the senatorial dignity. The father was afterwards invested with the government of Lucania,⁸³ and Aurelian, who soon admitted the abdicated monarch to his friendship and conversation, familiarly asked him, Whether it were not more desirable to administer a province of Italy than to reign beyond the Alps? The son long continued a respectable member of the senate; nor was there any one of the Roman nobility more esteemed by Aurelian, as well as by his successors.⁸⁴

So long and so various was the pomp of Aurelian's triumph, that, although it opened with the dawn of day, the slow majesty of the procession ascended not the Capitol before the ninth hour; and it was already dark when the emperor returned to the palace. The festival was protracted by theatrical representations, the games of the circus, the hunting of wild beasts, combats of gladiators, and naval engagements. Liberal donatives were distributed to the army and people, and several institutions, agreeable or beneficial to the city, contributed to perpetuate the glory of Aurelian. A considerable portion of his oriental spoils was consecrated to the gods of Rome; the Capitol, and every other temple, glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety; and the temple of the Sun alone received above fifteen thousand pounds of gold.⁸⁵ This last was a magnificent structure, erected by the emperor on the side of the Quirinal hill, and dedicated, soon after the triumph, to that deity whom Aurelian adored as the parent of his life and fortunes. His mother had been an inferior priestess in a chapel of the Sun; a peculiar devotion to the god of Light was a sentiment which the fortunate peasant imbibed in his infancy; and every step of his elevation, every victory of his reign, fortified superstition by gratitude.⁸⁶

The arms of Aurelian had vanquished the foreign and domestic foes of the republic. We are assured that, by his salutary rigour, crimes and factions, mischievous arts and pernicious connivance, the luxuriant growth of a feeble and oppressive

His magnificence and devotion.

He suppresses a sedition at Rome.

⁸³ Vopisc. in Hist. August. p. 222. [Aurel. c. 39.] Eutropius, ix. 13 [9]. Victor junior. But Pollio, in Hist. August. p. 196 [xxx. Tyranni de Tetrico, sen. c. 23], says that Tetricus was made corrector of all Italy.

⁸⁴ Hist. August. p. 197. [Vopisc. xxx. Tyranni, de Tetrico jun. c. 24.]

⁸⁵ Vopiscus in Hist. August. 222. [Aurel. c. 39.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 61, p. 53] p. 56. He placed in it the images of Belus and of the Sun, which he had brought from Palmyra. It was dedicated in the fourth year of his reign (Euseb. in Chron. [an. CCLXXV.]), but was most assuredly begun immediately on his accession.

⁸⁶ See in the Augustan History, p. 210 [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 5], the omens of his fortune. His devotion to the sun appears in his letters, on his medals, and is mentioned in the Cæsars of Julian. Commentaire de Spanheim, p. 109.

government, were eradicated throughout the Roman world.⁸⁷ But if we attentively reflect how much swifter is the progress of corruption than its cure, and if we remember that the years abandoned to public disorders exceeded the months allotted to the martial reign of Aurelian, we must confess that a few short intervals of peace were insufficient for the arduous work of reformation. Even his attempt to restore the integrity of the coin was opposed by a formidable insurrection. The emperor's vexation breaks out in one of his private letters: "Surely," says he, "the gods have decreed that my life should be a perpetual warfare. A sedition within the walls has just now given birth to a very serious civil war. The workmen of the mint, at the instigation of Felicissimus, a slave to whom I had intrusted an employment in the finances, have risen in rebellion. They are at length suppressed; but seven thousand of my soldiers have been slain in the contest, of those troops whose ordinary station is in Dacia and the camps along the Danube."⁸⁸ Other writers, who confirm the same fact, add likewise, that it happened soon after Aurelian's triumph; that the decisive engagement was fought on the Cælian hill; that the workmen of the mint had adulterated the coin; and that the emperor restored the public credit, by delivering out good money in exchange for the bad, which the people was commanded to bring into the treasury.⁸⁹

We might content ourselves with relating this extraordinary transaction, but we cannot dissemble how much, in its present form, it appears to us inconsistent and incredible. The debasement of the coin is indeed well suited to the administration of Gallienus; nor is it unlikely that the instruments of the corruption might dread the inflexible justice of Aurelian. But the guilt, as well as the profit, must have been confined to a few; nor is it easy to conceive by what arts they could arm a people whom they had injured against a monarch whom they had betrayed. We might naturally expect that such miscreants should have shared the public detestation with the informers and the other ministers of oppression; and that the reformation of the coin should have been an action equally popular with the destruction of those obsolete accounts which, by the emperor's order, were burnt in the forum of Trajan.⁹⁰ In an age when the principles of commerce were so imperfectly understood, the most desirable end might perhaps be effected by harsh and injudicious means; but a temporary grievance of such a nature can

⁸⁷ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221. [Aurel. c. 37.]

⁸⁸ Hist. August. p. 222. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 38.] Aurelian calls these soldiers *Illyrii*, *Riparienses*, *Castriani*, and *Dacisci*.

⁸⁹ Zosimus, l. i. [c. 61, p. 53] p. 56. Eutropius, ix. 14 [9]. Aurel. Victor. [de Cesar. 35.]

⁹⁰ Hist. August p. 222. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 39.] Aurel. Victor. [de Cesar. 35.]

scarcely excite and support a serious civil war. The repetition or intolerable taxes, imposed either on the land or on the necessities of life, may at last provoke those who will not, or who cannot, relinquish their country. But the case is far otherwise in every operation which, by whatsoever expedients, restores the just value of money. The transient evil is soon obliterated by the permanent benefit, the loss is divided among multitudes; and if a few wealthy individuals experience a sensible diminution of treasure, with their riches they at the same time lose the degree of weight and importance which they derived from the possession of them. However Aurelian might choose to disguise the real cause of the insurrection, his reformation of the coin could furnish only a faint pretence to a party already powerful and discontented. Rome, though deprived of freedom, was distracted by faction. The people, towards whom the emperor, himself a plebeian, always expressed a peculiar fondness, lived in perpetual dissension with the senate, the equestrian order, and the Prætorian guards.⁹¹ Nothing less than the firm though secret conspiracy of those orders, of the authority of the first, the wealth of the second, and the arms of the third, could have displayed a strength capable of contending in battle with the veteran legions of the Danube, which, under the conduct of a martial sovereign, had achieved the conquest of the West and of the East.

Whatever was the cause or the object of this rebellion, imputed with so little probability to the workmen of the mint, Aurelian used his victory with unrelenting rigour.⁹² He was naturally of a severe disposition. A peasant and a soldier, his nerves yielded not easily to the impressions of sympathy, and he could sustain without emotion the sight of tortures and death. Trained from his earliest youth in the exercise of arms, he set too small a value on the life of a citizen, chastised by military execution the slightest offences, and transferred the stern discipline of the camp into the civil administration of the laws. His love of justice often became a blind and furious passion; and, whenever he deemed his own or the public safety endangered, he disregarded the rules of evidence and the proportion of punishments. The unprovoked rebellion with which the Romans rewarded his services exasperated his haughty spirit. The noblest families of the capital were involved in the guilt or suspicion of this dark conspiracy. A hasty spirit of revenge urged the bloody prosecution, and it proved fatal to one of the nephews of the emperor. The executioners (if we may use the

Cruelty of
Aurelian.

⁹¹ It already raged before Aurelian's return from Egypt. See Vopiscus, who quotes an original letter. Hist. August. p. 244. [Vopisc. Firmus, c. 5.]

⁹² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222. [Aurel. c. 39.] The two Victors. Eutropius, lx. 14 [9]. Zosimus (l. i. p. 43) mentions only three senators, and places their death before the eastern war.

expression of a contemporary poet^a) were fatigued, the prisons were crowded, and the unhappy senate lamented the death or absence of its most illustrious members.⁹³ Nor was the pride of Aurelian less offensive to that assembly than his cruelty. Ignorant or impatient of the restraints of civil institutions, he disdained to hold his power by any other title than that of the sword, and governed by right of conquest an empire which he had saved and subdued.⁹⁴

It was observed by one of the most sagacious of the Roman princes, that the talents of his predecessor Aurelian were better suited to the command of an army than to the government of an empire.⁹⁵ Conscious of the character in which nature and experience had enabled him to excel, he again took the field a few months after his triumph. It was expedient to exercise the restless temper of the legions in some foreign war, and the Persian monarch, exulting in the shame of Valerian, still braved with impunity the offended majesty of Rome. At the head of an army, less formidable by its numbers than by its discipline and valour, the emperor advanced as far as the Streights which divide Europe from Asia. He there experienced that the most absolute power is a weak defence against the effects of despair. He had threatened one of his secretaries who was accused of extortion, and it was known that he seldom threatened in vain. The last hope which remained for the criminal was to involve some of the principal officers of the army in his danger, or at least in his fears. Artfully counterfeiting his master's hand, he showed them, in a long and bloody list, their own names devoted to death. Without suspecting or examining the fraud, they resolved to secure their lives by the murder of the emperor. On his march, between Byzantium and Heraclea, Aurelian was suddenly attacked by the conspirators, whose stations gave them a right to surround his person, and, after a short resistance, fell by the hand of Mucapor, a general whom he had always loved and trusted. He died regretted by the army, detested by the senate, but universally acknowledged as a warlike and fortunate prince, the useful though severe reformer of a degenerate state.⁹⁶

He marches
into the
East, and is
assassinated.

A.D. 274.
October.

A.D. 275.
January.
[March.]

⁹³ *Nulla catenati feralis pompa senatûs
Carnificum lassabit opus; nec carcere pleno
Infelix rarus numerabit curia Patres.* Calpurn. Eclôg. i. 60.

⁹⁴ According to the younger Victor [Epitome, c. 35], he sometimes wore the diadem. *Deus* and *Dominus* appear on his medals.

⁹⁵ It was the observation of Diocletian. See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 224. [Aurel. c. 44.]

⁹⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221. [Aurel. c. 35, seq.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 62] p. 57. Eutrop. ix. 15 [9]. The two Victors.

CHAPTER XII.

CONDUCT OF THE ARMY AND SENATE AFTER THE DEATH OF AURELIAN.—REIGNS OF TACITUS, PROBUS, CARUS AND HIS SONS.

SUCH was the unhappy condition of the Roman emperors, that, whatever might be their conduct, their fate was commonly the same. A life of pleasure or virtue, of severity or mildness, of indolence or glory, alike led to an untimely grave; and almost every reign is closed by the same disgusting repetition of treason and murder. The death of Aurelian, however, is remarkable by its extraordinary consequences. The legions admired, lamented, and revenged their victorious chief. The artifice of his perfidious secretary was discovered and punished. The deluded conspirators attended the funeral of their injured sovereign with sincere or well-feigned contrition, and submitted to the unanimous resolution of the military order, which was signified by the following epistle: "The brave and fortunate armies to the senate and people of Rome.—The crime of one man, and the error of many, have deprived us of the late emperor Aurelian. May it please you, venerable lords and fathers! to place him in the number of the gods, and to appoint a successor whom your judgment shall declare worthy of the Imperial purple! None of those whose guilt or misfortune have contributed to our loss shall ever reign over us."¹ The Roman senators heard, without surprise, that another emperor had been assassinated in his camp; they secretly rejoiced in the fall of Aurelian; but the modest and dutiful address of the legions, when it was communicated in full assembly by the consul, diffused the most pleasing astonishment. Such honours as fear and perhaps esteem could extort, they liberally poured forth on the memory of their deceased sovereign. Such acknowledgments as gratitude could inspire they returned to the faithful armies of the republic, who entertained so just a sense of the legal authority of the senate in the choice of an emperor. Yet, notwithstanding this flattering appeal, the most prudent of the assembly declined exposing their safety and dignity to the caprice of an armed multitude. The strength of the legions was, indeed, a pledge of their sincerity, since those who may command are seldom reduced to the necessity of dissembling; but could it naturally

Extraordinary contest between the army and the senate for the choice of an emperor.

¹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222. [Aurel. c. 41.] Aurelius Victor mentions a formal deputation from the troops to the senate.

be expected that a hasty repentance would correct the inveterate habits of fourscore years? Should the soldiers relapse into their accustomed seditions, their insolence might disgrace the majesty of the senate and prove fatal to the object of its choice. Motives like these dictated a decree by which the election of a new emperor was referred to the suffrage of the military order.

The contention that ensued is one of the best attested but most improbable events in the history of mankind.² The troops, as if satiated with the exercise of power, again conjured the senate to invest one of its own body with the Imperial purple. The senate still persisted in its refusal; the army in its request. The reciprocal offer was pressed and rejected at least three times, and, whilst the obstinate modesty of either party was resolved to receive a master from the hands of the other, eight months insensibly elapsed; an amazing period of tranquil anarchy, during which the Roman world remained without a sovereign, without an usurper, and without a sedition. The generals and magistrates appointed by Aurelian continued to execute their ordinary functions; and it is observed that a proconsul of Asia was the only considerable person removed from his office in the whole course of the interregnum.

An event somewhat similar but much less authentic is supposed to have happened after the death of Romulus, who, in his life and character, bore some affinity with Aurelian. The throne was vacant during twelve months till the election of a Sabine philosopher, and the public peace was guarded in the same manner by the union of the several orders of the state. But, in the time of Numa and Romulus, the arms of the people were controlled by the authority of the Patricians; and the balance of freedom was easily preserved in a small and virtuous community.³ The decline of the Roman state,

² Vopiscus, our principal authority, wrote at Rome sixteen years only after the death of Aurelian; and, besides the recent notoriety of the facts, constantly draws his materials from the Journals of the Senate and the original papers of the Ulpian library. Zosimus and Zonaras appear as ignorant of this transaction as they were in general of the Roman constitution.

³ Liv. i. 17. Dionys. Halicarn. l. ii. [c. 57] p. 115. Plutarch in Numa [c. 2], p. 60. The first of these writers relates the story like an orator, the second like a lawyer, and the third like a moralist, and none of them probably without some intermixture of fable.

^a This is the date in Vopiscus, "III. Non. Febr." (Aurel. c. 41); but as it is in opposition to other authorities, which make the interregnum between the death of Aurelian and the elevation of Tacitus only six months (not eight, as Gibbon says), it is proposed to read "III. Non. Apr." instead of "III. Non. Febr.," which will place the death of Aurelian at the

end of March. Tacitus was elected the 25th of September. During the interregnum Severina, the widow of Aurelian, appears to have been acknowledged as empress at Alexandria, since her Alexandrian coins bear only the years 6 and 7, and Aurelian died in the sixth year of his reign. See Eckhel, vol. vii. p. 488; Clinton, Fasti Rom. vol. i. p. 312, 313. -S.

far different from its infancy, was attended with every circumstance that could banish from an interregnum the prospect of obedience and harmony: an immense and tumultuous capital, a wide extent of empire, the servile equality of despotism, an army of four hundred thousand mercenaries, and the experience of frequent revolutions. Yet, notwithstanding all these temptations, the discipline and memory of Aurelian still restrained the seditious temper of the troops, as well as the fatal ambition of their leaders. The flower of the legions maintained their stations on the banks of the Bosphorus, and the Imperial standard awed the less powerful camps of Rome and of the provinces. A generous though transient enthusiasm seemed to animate the military order; and we may hope that a few real patriots cultivated the returning friendship of the army and the senate as the only expedient capable of restoring the republic to its ancient beauty and vigour.

On the twenty-fifth of September, near eight months after the murder of Aurelian, the consul convoked an assembly of the senate, and reported the doubtful and dangerous situation of the empire. He slightly insinuated that the precarious loyalty of the soldiers depended on the chance of every hour and of every accident; but he represented, with the most convincing eloquence, the various dangers that might attend any farther delay in the choice of an emperor. Intelligence, he said, was already received that the Germans had passed the Rhine and occupied some of the strongest and most opulent cities of Gaul. The ambition of the Persian king kept the East in perpetual alarms; Egypt, Africa, and Illyricum, were exposed to foreign and domestic arms; and the levity of Syria would prefer even a female sceptre to the sanctity of the Roman laws. The consul then, addressing himself to Tacitus, the first of the senators,⁴ required his opinion on the important subject of a proper candidate for the vacant throne.

A.D. 275.
Sept. 25.
The consul
assembles
the senate.

If we can prefer personal merit to accidental greatness, we shall esteem the birth of Tacitus more truly noble than that of kings. He claimed his descent from the philosophic historian whose writings will instruct the last generations of mankind.⁵ The senator Tacitus was then seventy-five years of age.⁶

Character
of Tacitus.

⁴ Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 227 [Tacit. c. 4] calls him "primæ sententiæ consularis;" and soon afterwards *Princeps senatus*. It is natural to suppose that the monarchs of Rome, disdaining that humble title, resigned it to the most ancient of the senators.

⁵ The only objection to this genealogy is, that the historian was named Cornelius, the emperor Claudius. But under the Lower Empire surnames were extremely various and uncertain.

⁶ Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 28] p. 637 [ed. Paris; p. 603, ed. Bonn]. The Alexandrian Chronicle, by an obvious mistake, transfers that age to Aurelian.

The long period of his innocent life was adorned with wealth and honours. He had twice been invested with the consular dignity,⁷ and enjoyed with elegance and sobriety his ample patrimony of between two and three millions sterling.⁸ The experience of so many princes, whom he had esteemed or endured, from the vain follies of Elagabalus to the useful rigour of Aurelian, taught him to form a just estimate of the duties, the dangers, and the temptations of their sublime station. From the assiduous study of his immortal ancestor he derived the knowledge of the Roman constitution and of human nature.⁹ The voice of the people had already named Tacitus as the citizen the most worthy of empire. The ungrateful rumour reached his ears, and induced him to seek the retirement of one of his villas in Campania. He had passed two months in the delightful privacy of Baiæ, when he reluctantly obeyed the summons of the consul to resume his honourable place in the senate, and to assist the republic with his counsels on this important occasion.

He arose to speak, when, from every quarter of the house, he was saluted with the names of Augustus and Emperor.
He is elected emperor ; "Tacitus Augustus, the gods preserve thee! we choose thee for our sovereign, to thy care we intrust the republic and the world. Accept the empire from the authority of the senate. It is due to thy rank, to thy conduct, to thy manners." As soon as the tumult of acclamations subsided Tacitus attempted to decline the dangerous honour, and to express his wonder that they should elect his age and infirmities to succeed the martial vigour of Aurelian. "Are these limbs, conscript fathers! fitted to sustain the weight of armour, or to practise the exercises of the camp? The variety of climates, and the hardships of a military life, would soon oppress a feeble constitution, which subsists only by the most tender management. My exhausted strength scarcely enables me to discharge the duty of a senator; how insufficient would it prove to the arduous labours of war and government! Can you hope that the legions will respect a weak old man, whose days have been spent in the shade of peace and retirement? Can you desire that

⁷ In the year 273 he was ordinary consul. But he must have been Suffectus many years before, and most probably under Valerian.

⁸ *Bis millies octingenties*. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 229. [Tacit. c. 10.] This sum, according to the old standard, was equivalent to eight hundred and forty thousand Roman pounds of silver, each of the value of three pounds sterling. But in the age of Tacitus the coin had lost much of its weight and purity.

⁹ After his accession he gave orders that ten copies of the historian should be annually transcribed and placed in the public libraries. The Roman libraries have long since perished, and the most valuable part of Tacitus was preserved in a single MS., and discovered in a monastery of Westphalia. See Bayle, Dictionnaire, Art. *Twite*, and Lipsius ad Annal. ii. 9.

"I should ever find reason to regret the favourable opinion of the senate?"¹⁰

The reluctance of Tacitus, and it might possibly be sincere, was encountered by the affectionate obstinacy of the senate. Five hundred voices repeated at once, in eloquent confusion, ^{and accepts the purple.} that the greatest of the Roman princes, Numa, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, had ascended the throne in a very advanced season of life; that the mind, not the body, a sovereign, not a soldier, was the object of their choice; and that they expected from him no more than to guide by his wisdom the valour of the legions. These pressing though tumultuary instances were seconded by a more regular oration of Metius Falconius, the next on the consular bench to Tacitus himself. He reminded the assembly of the evils which Rome had endured from the vices of headstrong and capricious youths, congratulated them on the election of a virtuous and experienced senator, and with a manly, though perhaps a selfish, freedom, exhorted Tacitus to remember the reasons of his elevation, and to seek a successor, not in his own family, but in the republic. The speech of Falconius was enforced by a general acclamation. The emperor elect submitted to the authority of his country, and received the voluntary homage of his equals. The judgment of the senate was confirmed by the consent of the Roman people and of the Prætorian guards.¹¹

The administration of Tacitus was not unworthy of his life and principles. A grateful servant of the senate, he considered ^{Authority of the senate.} that national council as the author, and himself as the subject, of the laws.¹² He studied to heal the wounds which Imperial pride, civil discord, and military violence had inflicted on the constitution, and to restore, at least, the image of the ancient republic as it had been preserved by the policy of Augustus and the virtues of Trajan and the Antonines. It may not be useless to recapitulate some of the most important prerogatives which the senate appeared to have regained by the election of Tacitus.¹³ 1. To invest one of their body, under the title of emperor, with the general command of the armies and the government of the frontier provinces. 2. To determine the list, or, as it was then styled, the College of Consuls. They were twelve in number, who, in successive pairs, each during the space of two months, filled the year, and represented the

¹⁰ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 227. [Tacit. c. 4.]

¹¹ Hist. August. p. 228 [ib. c. 7]. Tacitus addressed the Prætorians by the appellation of *sanctissimi milites*, and the people by that of *sacratissimi Quirites*.

¹² In his manumissions he never exceeded the number of an hundred, as limited by the Caninian law, which was enacted under Augustus, and at length repealed by Justinian. See Casaubon ad locum Vopisci.

¹³ See the Lives of Tacitus, Florianus, and Probus, in the Augustan History; we may be well assured that whatever the soldier gave the senator had already given.

lignity of that ancient office. The authority of the senate, in the nomination of the consuls, was exercised with such independent freedom, that no regard was paid to an irregular request of the emperor in favour of his brother Florianus. "The senate," exclaimed Tacitus, with the honest transport of a patriot, "understand the character of a prince whom they have chosen." 3. To appoint the proconsuls and presidents of the provinces, and to confer on all the magistrates their civil jurisdiction. 4. To receive appeals through the intermediate office of the præfect of the city from all the tribunals of the empire. 5. To give force and validity, by their decrees, to such as they should approve of the emperor's edicts. 6. To these several branches of authority we may add some inspection over the finances, since, even in the stern reign of Aurelian, it was in their power to divert a part of the revenue from the public service.¹⁴

Circular epistles were sent, without delay, to all the principal cities of the empire—Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens, Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage—to claim their obedience, and to inform them of the happy revolution which had restored the Roman senate to its ancient dignity. Two of these epistles are still extant. We likewise possess two very singular fragments of the private correspondence of the senators on this occasion. They discover the most excessive joy and the most unbounded hopes. "Cast away your indolence," it is thus that one of the senators addresses his friend, "emerge from your retirements of Baïæ and Puteoli. Give yourself to the city, to the senate. Rome flourishes, the whole republic flourishes. Thanks to the Roman army, to an army truly Roman, at length we have recovered our just authority, the end of all our desires. We hear appeals, we appoint proconsuls, we create emperors; perhaps, too, we may restrain them—to the wise a word is sufficient."¹⁵ These lofty expectations were, however, soon disappointed; nor, indeed, as it possible that the armies and the provinces should long obey the luxurious and unwarlike nobles of Rome. On the slightest touch the unsupported fabric of their pride and power fell to the ground. The expiring senate displayed a sudden lustre, blazed for a moment, and was extinguished for ever.

All that had yet passed at Rome was no more than a theatrical representation, unless it was ratified by the more substantial power of the legions. Leaving the senators to enjoy their dream of freedom and ambition, Tacitus proceeded to the Thracian camp, and was there, by the Prætorian

¹⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216. [Aurel. c. 20.] The passage is perfectly clear, but both Casaubon and Salmassius wish to correct it.

¹⁵ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230, 232, 233. [Florian. c. 5 and 6.] The senators celebrated the happy restoration with hecatombs and public rejoicings.

præfect, presented to the assembled troops as the prince whom they themselves had demanded, and whom the senate had bestowed. As soon as the præfect was silent the emperor addressed himself to the soldiers with eloquence and propriety. He gratified their avarice by a liberal distribution of treasure under the names of pay and donative. He engaged their esteem by a spirited declaration that, although his age might disable him from the performance of military exploits, his counsels should never be unworthy of a Roman general, the successor of the brave Aurelian.¹⁶

Whilst the deceased emperor was making preparations for a second expedition into the East, he had negotiated with the Alani,^a a Scythian people, who pitched their tents in the neighbourhood of the lake Mæotis. Those barbarians, allured by presents and subsidies, had promised to invade Persia with a numerous body of light cavalry. They were faithful to their engagements; but when they arrived on the Roman frontier Aurelian was already dead, the design of the Persian war was at least suspended, and the generals who, during the interregnum, exercised a doubtful authority, were unprepared either to receive or to oppose them. Provoked by such treatment, which they considered as trifling and perfidious, the Alani had recourse to their own valour for their payment and revenge; and as they moved with the usual swiftness of Tartars, they had soon spread themselves over the provinces of Pontus, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Galatia. The legions who, from the opposite shores of the Bosphorus, could almost distinguish the flames of the cities and villages, impatiently urged their general to lead them against the invaders. The conduct of Tacitus was suitable to his age and station. He convinced the barbarians of the faith, as well as of the power, of the empire. Great numbers of the Alani, appeased by the punctual discharge of the engagements which Aurelian had contracted with them, relinquished their booty and captives, and quietly retreated to their own deserts beyond the Phasis. Against the remainder, who refused peace, the Roman emperor waged, in person, a successful war. Seconded by an army of brave and experienced veterans, in a few weeks he delivered the provinces of Asia from the terror of the Scythian invasion.¹⁷

The Alani
invade Asia,
and are re-
pulsed by
Tacitus.

¹⁶ Hist. August. p. 228. [Vopisc. Tacit. c. 8.]

¹⁷ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230. [Tacit. c. 13.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 63] p. 57. Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 28] p. 637 [ed. Paris; p. 608, ed. Bonn]. Two passages in the Life of Probus (p. 236, 238 [Vopisc. Probus, c. 8 and 12]) convince me that these Scythian invaders of Pontus were Alani. If we may believe Zosimus (l. i. [c. 64] p. 58), Florianus pursued them as far as the Cimmeric Bosphorus. But he had scarcely time for so long and difficult an expedition.

^a On the Alani, see ch. xxvi. note 55.—M.

But the glory and life of Tacitus were of short duration. Transported in the depth of winter from the soft retirement of Campania to the foot of Mount Caucasus, he sunk under the unaccustomed hardships of a military life. The fatigues

Death of the emperor Tacitus.

of the body were aggravated by the cares of the mind. For a while the angry and selfish passions of the soldiers had been suspended by the enthusiasm of public virtue. They soon broke out with redoubled violence, and raged in the camp, and even in the tent of the aged emperor. His mild and amiable character served only to inspire contempt, and he was incessantly tormented with factions which he could not assuage, and by demands which it was impossible to satisfy. Whatever flattering expectations he had conceived of reconciling the public disorders, Tacitus soon was convinced that the licentiousness of the army disdained the feeble restraint of laws, and his last hour was hastened by anguish and disappointment. It may be doubtful whether the soldiers imbrued their hands in the blood of this innocent prince.¹⁸ It is certain that their insolence was the cause of his death. He expired at Tyana in Cappadocia, after a reign of only six months and about twenty days.¹⁹

A.D. 276.
April 12.

Usurpation and death of his brother Florianus.

The eyes of Tacitus were scarcely closed before his brother Florianus showed himself unworthy to reign by the hasty usurpation of the purple, without expecting the approbation of the senate. The reverence for the Roman constitution, which yet influenced the camp and the provinces, was sufficiently strong to dispose them to censure, but not to provoke them to oppose, the precipitate ambition of Florianus. The discontent would have evaporated in idle murmurs, had not the general of the East, the heroic Probus, boldly declared himself the avenger of the senate. The contest, however, was still unequal; nor could the most able leader, at the head of the effeminate troops of Egypt and Syria, encounter, with any hopes of victory, the legions of Europe, whose irresistible strength appeared to support the brother of Tacitus. But the fortune and activity of Probus triumphed over every obstacle. The hardy veterans of his rival, accustomed to cold climates, sickened and consumed away in the sultry heats of Cilicia, where the summer proved remarkably unwholesome. Their numbers were diminished by frequent desertion, the passes of the mountains were feebly defended; Tarsus opened its gates; and the soldiers of Florianus, when they had permitted him to enjoy the Imperial title

¹⁸ Eutropius [9, c. 10] and Aurelius Victor [c. 36] only say that he died; Victor Junior adds, that it was of a fever. Zosimus [i. 63, p. 55] and Zonaras [xii. c. 28] affirm that he was killed by the soldiers. Vopiscus [Tacit. c. 13] mentions both accounts, and seems to hesitate. Yet surely these jarring opinions are easily reconciled.

¹⁹ According to the two Victors, he reigned exactly two hundred days.

about three months, delivered the empire from civil war by the easy sacrifice of a prince whom they despised.²⁰

The perpetual revolutions of the throne had so perfectly erased every notion of hereditary right, that the family of an unfortunate emperor was incapable of exciting the jealousy of his successors. The children of Tacitus and Florianus were permitted to descend into a private station, and to mingle with the general mass of the people. Their poverty indeed became an additional safeguard to their innocence. When Tacitus was elected by the senate he resigned his ample patrimony to the public service,²¹ an act of generosity specious in appearance, but which evidently disclosed his intention of transmitting the empire to his descendants. The only consolation of their fallen state was the remembrance of transient greatness, and a distant hope, the child of a flattering prophecy, that, at the end of a thousand years, a monarch of the race of Tacitus should arise, the protector of the senate, the restorer of Rome, and the conqueror of the whole earth.²²

Their family
subsists in
obscurity.

The peasants of Illyricum, who had already given Claudius and Aurelian to the sinking empire, had an equal right to glory in the elevation of Probus.²³ Above twenty years before, the emperor Valerian, with his usual penetration, had discovered the rising merit of the young soldier, on whom he conferred the rank of tribune long before the age prescribed by the military regulations. The tribune soon justified his choice by a victory over a great body of Sarmatians, in which he saved the life of a near relation of Valerian; and deserved to receive from the emperor's hand the collars, bracelets, spears, and banners, the mural and the civic crown, and all the honourable rewards reserved by ancient Rome for successful valour. The third, and afterwards the tenth, legion were intrusted to the command of Probus, who, in every step of his promotion, showed himself superior to the station which he filled. Africa and Pontus, the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, and the Nile by turns afforded him the most splendid occasions of displaying his personal prowess and his conduct in war. Aurelian was indebted to him for the conquest of Egypt, and still

Character
and eleva-
tion of the
emperor
Probus.

²⁰ Hist. August. p. 231. [Vopiscus, Florian. c. 1.] Zosimus, l. i. [c. 64, p. 56] p. 58, 59. Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 29, p. 609] p. 637. Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 37] says that Probus assumed the empire in Illyricum; an opinion which (though adopted by a very learned man) would throw that period of history into inextricable confusion.

²¹ Hist. August. p. 229. [Vopisc. Tacit. c. 10.]

²² He was to send judges to the Parthians, Persians, and Sarmatians, a president to Taprobana, and a proconsul to the Roman island (supposed by Casaubon and Salmasius to mean Britain). Such a history as mine (says Vopiscus with proper modesty) will not subsist a thousand years to expose or justify the prediction.

²³ For the private life of Probus, see Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 234-237. [Probus, c. 3, *seqq.*]

more indebted for the honest courage with which he often checked the cruelty of his master. Tacitus, who desired by the abilities of his generals to supply his own deficiency of military talents, named him commander-in-chief of all the eastern provinces, with five times the usual salary, the promise of the consulship, and the hope of a triumph. When Probus ascended the Imperial throne he was about forty-four years of age;²⁴ in the full possession of his fame, of the love of the army, and of a mature vigour of mind and body.

His acknowledged merit, and the success of his arms against Florianus, left him without an enemy or a competitor. Yet, if we may credit his own professions, very far from being desirous of the empire, he had accepted it with the most sincere reluctance. "But it is no longer in my power," says Probus in a private letter, "to lay down a title so full of envy and of danger. I must continue to personate the character which the soldiers have imposed upon me."²⁵ His dutiful address to the senate displayed the sentiments, or at least the language, of a Roman patriot: "When you elected one of your order, conscript fathers! to succeed the emperor Aurelian, you acted in a manner suitable to your justice and wisdom. For you are the legal sovereigns of the world, and the power which you derive from your ancestors will descend to your posterity. Happy would it have been if Florianus, instead of usurping the purple of his brother, like a private inheritance, had expected what your majesty might determine, either in his favour, or in that of any other person. The prudent soldiers have punished his rashness. To me they have offered the title of Augustus; but I submit to your clemency my pretensions and my merits."²⁶ When

this respectful epistle was read by the consul, the senators were unable to disguise their satisfaction that Probus should condescend thus humbly to solicit a sceptre which he already possessed. They celebrated with the warmest gratitude his virtues, his exploits, and above all his moderation. A decree immediately passed, without a dissenting voice, to ratify the election of the eastern armies, and to confer on their chief all the several branches of the Imperial dignity: the names of Cæsar and Augustus, the title of Father of his country, the right of making in the same day three motions in the senate,²⁷ the office of Pontifex Maximus, the tribunitian power, and

²⁴ According to the Alexandrian chronicle, he was fifty at the time of his death.

²⁵ The letter was addressed to the Prætorian præfect, whom (on condition of his good behaviour) he promised to continue in his great office. See Hist. August. p. 237. [Vopisc. Probus, c. 10.]

²⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 237 [in Probo, c. 11]. The date of the letter is assuredly faulty. Instead of *Non. Febru. ar.* we may read *Non. August.*

²⁷ Hist. August. p. 238. [Vopisc. *id.* c. 12.] It is odd that the senate should treat Probus less favourably than Marcus Antoninus. That prince had received, even

the proconsular command; a mode of investiture which, though it seemed to multiply the authority of the emperor, expressed the constitution of the ancient republic. The reign of Probus corresponded with this fair beginning. The senate was permitted to direct the civil administration of the empire. Their faithful general asserted the honour of the Roman arms, and often laid at their feet crowns of gold and barbaric trophies, the fruits of his numerous victories.²⁸ Yet, whilst he gratified their vanity, he must secretly have despised their indolence and weakness. Though it was every moment in their power to repeal the disgraceful edict of Gallienus, the proud successors of the Scipios patiently acquiesced in their exclusion from all military employments. They soon experienced that those who refuse the sword must renounce the sceptre.

The strength of Aurelian had crushed on every side the enemies of Rome. After his death they seemed to revive with an increase of fury and of numbers. They were again vanquished by the active vigour of Probus, who, in a short reign of about six years,²⁹ equalled the fame of ancient heroes, and restored peace and order to every province of the Roman world. The dangerous frontier of Rhætia he so firmly secured, that he left it without the suspicion of an enemy. He broke the wandering power of the Sarmatian tribes, and by the terror of his arms compelled those barbarians to relinquish their spoil. The Gothic nation courted the alliance of so warlike an emperor.³⁰ He attacked the Isaurians in their mountains, besieged and took several of their strongest castles,³¹ and flattered himself that he had for ever suppressed a domestic foe whose independence so deeply wounded the majesty of the empire. The troubles excited by the usurper Firmus in the Upper Egypt had never been perfectly appeased, and the cities of Ptolemais and Coptos, fortified by the alliance of the Blemmyes, still maintained an obscure rebellion. The chastisement of those cities, and of their auxiliaries the savages of the South, is said to have alarmed the court of Persia,³² and the Great King sued in vain for the friendship of Probus. Most

Victories
of Probus
over the
barbarians.

before the death of Pius, *Jus quintæ relationis*. See Capitolin. in Hist. August. p. 24 [in M. Anton. c. 6].

²⁸ See the dutiful letter of Probus to the senate after his German victories. Hist. August. p. 239. [Vopisc. Prob. c. 15.]

²⁹ The date and duration of the reign of Probus are very correctly ascertained by Cardinal Noris in his learned work, *De Epochis Syro-Macedonum*, p. 96-105. A passage of Eusebius connects the second year of Probus with the æras of several of the Syrian cities.

³⁰ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 239. [Prob. c. 16.]

³¹ Zosimus (l. i. [c. 69 sq.] p. 62-65) tells us a very long and trifling story of Lydius the Isaurian robber.

³² Zosim. l. i. [c. 7] p. 65. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 239, 240. [Prob. c. 17.] But it seems incredible that the defeat of the savages of Æthiopia could affect the Persian monarch.

of the exploits which distinguished his reign were achieved by the personal valour and conduct of the emperor, insomuch that the writer of his Life expresses some amazement how, in so short a time, a single man could be present in so many distant wars. The remaining actions he intrusted to the care of his lieutenants, the judicious choice of whom forms no inconsiderable part of his glory. Carus, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, Galerius, Asclepiodatus, Annibalianus, and a crowd of other chiefs, who afterwards ascended or supported the throne, were trained to arms in the severe school of Aurelian and Probus.³³

But the most important service which Probus rendered to the republic was the deliverance of Gaul, and the recovery of seventy flourishing cities oppressed by the barbarians of Germany, who, since the death of Aurelian, had ravaged that great province with impunity.³⁴ Among the various multitude of those fierce invaders, we may distinguish, with some degree of clearness, three great armies, or rather nations, successively vanquished by the valour of Probus. He drove back the Franks into their morasses; a descriptive circumstance from whence we may infer that the confederacy known by the manly appellation of *Free* already occupied the flat maritime country, intersected and almost overflowed by the stagnating waters of the Rhine, and that several tribes of the Frisians and Batavians had acceded to their alliance. He vanquished the Burgundians, a considerable people of the Vandalic race.^a They had wandered in quest of booty from the banks of the Oder to those of the Seine. They esteemed themselves sufficiently fortunate to purchase, by the restitution of all their booty, the permission of an undisturbed retreat. They attempted to elude that article of the treaty. Their punishment was immediate and terrible.³⁵ But of all the invaders of Gaul, the most formidable were the Lygians,^b a distant people who reigned over a wide domain on the frontiers of Poland and Silesia.³⁶ In the Lygian nation the Aarii held the first rank by

³³ Besides these well-known chiefs, several others are named by Vopiscus (Hist. August. p. 241 [Prob. c. 22]), whose actions have not reached our knowledge.

³⁴ See the Cæsars of Julian [p. 314], and Hist. August. p. 238, 240, 241. [Vopisc. Prob. c. 13, c. 18, *sqq.*]

³⁵ Zosimus, l. i. [c. 68] p. 62. Hist. August. p. 238. [Vopisc. Probus, c. 13, 14.] But the latter supposes the punishment inflicted with the consent of their kings: if so, it was partial, like the offence.

³⁶ See Cluver. *Germania Antiqua*, l. iii. Ptolemy places in their country the city of Calisia, probably Calish in Silesia.

^a There is no doubt that the Burgundians were a German people; whereas the Vandals were probably a Slavonic race. See vol. i. p. 278.—S.

^b Lygii appears to have been the generic name of the Slavonians on the Vistula.

They are the same people as those called Lekhs by Nestor, the Russian chronicler of the 12th century. These Lekhs are the ancestors of the Poles. See Latham, *The Germania of Tacitus*, p. 158.—S.

their numbers and fierceness. "The Arii" (it is thus that they are "described by the energy of Tacitus) "study to improve by art and "circumstances the innate terrors of their barbarism. Their shields "are black, their bodies are painted black. They choose for the "combat the darkest hour of the night. Their host advances, "covered as it were with a funereal shade;³⁷ nor do they often find "an enemy capable of sustaining so strange and infernal an aspect. "Of all our senses, the eyes are the first vanquished in battle."³⁸ Yet the arms and discipline of the Romans easily discomfited these horrid phantoms. The Lygii were defeated in a general engagement, and Semno, the most renowned of their chiefs, fell alive into the hands of Probus. That prudent emperor, unwilling to reduce a brave people to despair, granted them an honourable capitulation, and permitted them to return in safety to their native country. But the losses which they suffered in the march, the battle, and the retreat, broke the power of the nation: nor is the Lygian name ever repeated in the history either of Germany or of the empire. The deliverance of Gaul is reported to have cost the lives of four hundred thousand of the invaders; a work of labour to the Romans, and of expense to the emperor, who gave a piece of gold for the head of every barbarian.³⁹ But as the fame of warriors is built on the destruction of human kind, we may naturally suspect that the sanguinary account was multiplied by the avarice of the soldiers, and accepted without any very severe examination by the liberal vanity of Probus.

Since the expedition of Maximin, the Roman generals had confined their ambition to a defensive war against the nations of Germany, who perpetually pressed on the frontiers of the empire. The more daring Probus pursued his Gallic victories, passed the Rhine, and displayed his invincible eagles on the banks of the Elbe and the Neckar. He was fully convinced that nothing could reconcile the minds of the barbarians to peace, unless they experienced in their own country the calamities of war. Germany, exhausted by the ill success of the last emigration, was astonished by his presence. Nine of the most considerable princes repaired to his camp, and fell prostrate at his feet. Such a treaty was humbly received by the Germans as it pleased the conqueror to dictate. He exacted a strict restitution of the effects and captives which they had carried away from the provinces; and obliged their own magistrates to punish the more obstinate robbers who presumed

and carries
his arms into
Germany.

³⁷ *Feralis umbra* is the expression of Tacitus: it is surely a very bold one. [The words of Tacitus are "*umbrâ feralis exercitus terrorem inferunt.*"—S.]

³⁸ Tacit. *Germania* (c. 43).

³⁹ Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 238 [Prob. c. 14].

to detain any part of the spoil. A considerable tribute of corn, cattle, and horses, the only wealth of barbarians, was reserved for the use of the garrisons which Probus established on the limits of their territory. He even entertained some thoughts of compelling the Germans to relinquish the exercise of arms, and to trust their differences to the justice, their safety to the power, of Rome. To accomplish these salutary ends, the constant residence of an Imperial governor, supported by a numerous army, was indispensably requisite. Probus therefore judged it more expedient to defer the execution of so great a design; which was indeed rather of specious than solid utility.⁴⁰ Had Germany been reduced into the state of a province, the Romans, with immense labour and expense, would have acquired only a more extensive boundary to defend against the fiercer and more active barbarians of Scythia.

Instead of reducing the warlike natives of Germany to the condition of subjects, Probus contented himself with the humble expedient of raising a bulwark against their inroads. The country which now forms the circle of Swabia had been left desert in the age of Augustus by the emigration of its ancient inhabitants.⁴¹ The fertility of the soil soon attracted a new colony from the adjacent provinces of Gaul. Crowds of adventurers, of a roving temper and of desperate fortunes, occupied the doubtful possession, and acknowledged, by the payment of tithes, the majesty of the empire.⁴² To protect these new subjects, a line of frontier garrisons was gradually extended from the Rhine to the Danube. About the reign of Hadrian, when that mode of defence began to be practised, these garrisons were connected and covered by a strong entrenchment of trees and palisades. In the place of so rude a bulwark, the emperor Probus constructed a stone wall of a considerable height, and strengthened it by towers at convenient distances. From the neighbourhood of Neustadt and Ratisbon on the Danube, it stretched across hills, valleys, rivers, and morasses, as far as Wimpfen on the Neckar, and at length terminated on the banks of the Rhine, after a winding course of near two hundred miles.⁴³ This important barrier, uniting the two mighty streams that protected

⁴⁰ Hist. August. p. 238, 239. [Vopisc. Probus, c. 14, 397.] Vopiscus quotes a letter [c. 15] from the emperor to the senate, in which he mentions his design of reducing Germany into a province.

⁴¹ Strabo, l. vii. [p. 290.] According to Velleius Paterculus (ii. 108, 109), Maroboduus led his Marcomanni into Bohemia: Cluverius (German. Antiq. iii. 8) proves that it was from Swabia.

⁴² These settlers, from the payment of tithes, were denominated *Decumates*. Tacit. Germania, c. 29.

⁴³ See notes de l'Abbé de la Bléterie à la Germanie de Tacite, p. 183. His account of the wall is chiefly borrowed (as he says himself) from the *Alsatis Illustrata* of Schæpflin.

the provinces of Europe, seemed to fill up the vacant space through which the barbarians, and particularly the Alemanni, could penetrate with the greatest facility into the heart of the empire. But the experience of the world, from China to Britain, has exposed the vain attempt of fortifying any extensive tract of country.⁴⁴ An active enemy, who can select and vary his points of attack, must in the end discover some feeble spot, or some unguarded moment. The strength, as well as the attention, of the defenders is divided; and such are the blind effects of terror on the firmest troops, that a line broken in a single place is almost instantly deserted. The fate of the wall which Probus erected may confirm the general observation. Within a few years after his death it was overthrown by the Alemanni. Its scattered ruins, universally ascribed to the power of the Dæmon, now serve only to excite the wonder of the Swabian peasant.

Among the useful conditions of peace imposed by Probus on the vanquished nations of Germany, was the obligation of supplying the Roman army with sixteen thousand recruits, the bravest and most robust of their youth. The emperor dispersed them through all the provinces, and distributed this dangerous reinforcement, in small bands of fifty or sixty each, among the national troops; judiciously observing that the aid which the republic derived from the barbarians should be felt but not seen.⁴⁵ Their aid was now become necessary. The feeble elegance of Italy and the internal provinces could no longer support the weight of arms. The hardy frontier of the Rhine and Danube still produced minds and bodies equal to the labours of the camp; but a perpetual series of wars had gradually diminished their numbers. The infrequency of marriage, and the ruin of agriculture, affected the principles of population, and not only destroyed the strength of the present, but intercepted the hope of future generations. The wisdom of Probus embraced a

Introduc-
tion and
settlement
of the bar-
barians.

⁴⁴ See *Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptiens*, tom. ii. p. 81-102. The anonymous author is well acquainted with the globe in general, and with Germany in particular: with regard to the latter, he quotes a work of M. Hauselmann; but he seems to confound the wall of Probus, designed against the Alemanni, with the fortification of the Mattiaci, constructed in the neighbourhood of Frankfort against the Catti.^a

⁴⁵ He distributed about fifty or sixty barbarians to a *Numerus*, as it was then called, a corps with whose established number we are not exactly acquainted.

^a De Pauw is well known to have been the author of this work, as of the *Recherches sur les Américains* before quoted. The judgment of M. Rémusat on this writer is in a very different, I fear a juster tone: "Quand au lieu de rechercher, d'examiner, d'étudier, on se borne, comme cet écrivain, à juger, à prononcer, à décider, sans connoître ni l'histoire ni les langues, sans recourir aux sources, sans même se

douter de leur existence, on peut en imposer pendant quelque temps à des lecteurs prévenus ou peu instruits; mais le mépris qui ne manque guère de succéder à cet engouement fait bientôt justice de ces assertions hasardées, et elles retombent dans l'oubli d'autant plus promptement qu'elles ont été posées avec plus de confiance ou de témérité." *Sur les Langues Tartares*, r. 231.—M.

great and beneficial plan of replenishing the exhausted frontiers, by new colonies of captive or fugitive barbarians, on whom he bestowed lands, cattle, instruments of husbandry, and every encouragement that might engage them to educate a race of soldiers for the service of the republic. Into Britain, and most probably into Cambridgeshire,⁴⁶ he transported a considerable body of Vandals. The impossibility of an escape reconciled them to their situation, and in the subsequent troubles of that island they approved themselves the most faithful servants of the state.⁴⁷ Great numbers of Franks and Gepidæ were settled on the banks of the Danube and the Rhine. An hundred thousand Bastarnæ, expelled from their own country, cheerfully accepted an establishment in Thrace, and soon imbibed the manners and sentiments of Roman subjects.⁴⁸ But the expectations of Probus were too often disappointed. The impatience and idleness of the barbarians could ill brook the slow labours of agriculture. Their unconquerable love of freedom, rising against despotism, provoked them into hasty rebellions, alike fatal to themselves and to the provinces,⁴⁹ nor could these artificial supplies, however repeated by succeeding emperors, restore the important limit of Gaul and Illyricum to its ancient and native vigour.

Of all the barbarians who abandoned their new settlements, and disturbed the public tranquillity, a very small number returned to their own country. For a short season they might wander in arms through the empire, but in the end they were surely destroyed by the power of a warlike emperor. The successful rashness of a party of Franks was attended, however, with such memorable consequences, that it ought not to be passed unnoticed. They had been established by Probus on the sea-coast of Pontus, with a view of strengthening the frontier against the inroads of the Alani. A fleet stationed in one of the harbours of the Euxine fell into the hands of the Franks; and they resolved, through unknown seas, to explore their way from the mouth of the Phasis to that of the Rhine. They easily escaped through the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, and, cruising along the Mediterranean, indulged their appetite for revenge and plunder by frequent descents on the unsuspecting shores of Asia, Greece, and Africa. The opulent city of Syracuse, in whose port the navies of Athens and Carthage had formerly been sunk, was sacked by a handful of barbarians, who massacred the

⁴⁶ Camden's *Britannia*, Introduction, p. 136; but he speaks from a very doubtful conjecture.

⁴⁷ Zosimus, l. i. [c. 68] p. 62. According to Vopiscus, another body of Vandals was less faithful.

⁴⁸ Hist. August. p. 240. Vopisc. Probus, c. 18.] They were probably expelled by the Goths. Zosim. l. i. [c. 71] p. 66.

⁴⁹ Hist. August. p. 240. [Vopisc. l. c.]

greatest part of the trembling inhabitants. From the island of Sicily the Franks proceeded to the Columns of Hercules, trusted themselves to the ocean, coasted round Spain and Gaul, and, steering their triumphant course through the British Channel, at length finished their surprising voyage by landing in safety on the Batavian or Frisian shores.⁵⁰ The example of their success, instructing their countrymen to conceive the advantages and to despise the dangers of the sea, pointed out to their enterprising spirit a new road to wealth and glory.

Notwithstanding the vigilance and activity of Probus, it was almost impossible that he could at once contain in obedience every part of his wide-extended dominions. The barbarians who ^{Revolt of Saturninus in the East;} broke their chains had seized the favourable opportunity of a domestic war. When the emperor marched to the relief of Gaul, he devolved the command of the East on Saturninus. That general, a man of merit and experience, was driven into rebellion by the absence of his sovereign, the levity of the Alexandrian people, the pressing instances of his friends, and his own fears; but from the moment of his elevation he never entertained a hope of empire or even of life. "Alas!" he said, "the republic has lost a useful servant, and the rashness of an hour has destroyed the services of many years. You know not," continued he, "the misery of sovereign power: a sword is perpetually suspended over our head. We dread our very guards, we distrust our companions. The choice of action or of repose is no longer in our disposition, nor is there any age, or character, or conduct, that can protect us from the censure of envy. In thus exalting me to the throne, you have doomed me to a life of cares, and to an untimely fate. The only consolation which remains is the assurance that I shall not fall alone."⁵¹ But as the former part of his prediction was verified by the victory, so the latter was disappointed by the clemency of Probus. That amiable prince attempted even to save the unhappy Saturninus from the fury of the soldiers. He had more than once solicited the usurper himself to place some confidence in the mercy of a sovereign who so highly esteemed his character, that he had punished as a ^{A.D. 279.} malicious informer the first who related the improbable news of his defection.⁵² Saturninus might perhaps have embraced the generous offer, had he not been restrained by the obstinate distrust of his

⁵⁰ Panegy. Vet. v. 18. Zosimus, l. i. [c. 71] p. 66.

⁵¹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 245, 246 [in Saturnino, c. 10]. The unfortunate orator had studied rhetoric at Carthage; and was therefore more probably a Moor (Zosim. l. i. [c. 66] p. 60) than a Gaul, as Vopiscus calls him.

⁵² Zonaras, l. xii. [c. 29] p. 638 [ed. Par.; p. 609, ed. Bonn.]

adherents. Their guilt was deeper, and their hopes more sanguine, than those of their experienced leader.

The revolt of Saturninus was scarcely extinguished in the East, before new troubles were excited in the West by the rebellion of Bonosus and Proculus in Gaul. The most distinguished merit of those two officers was their respective prowess, of the one in the combats of Bacchus, of the other in those of Venus,⁵³ yet neither of them were destitute of courage and capacity, and both sustained with honour the august character which the fear of punishment had engaged them to assume, till they sunk at length beneath the superior genius of Probus. He used the victory with his accustomed moderation, and spared the fortunes as well as the lives of their innocent families.⁵⁴

The arms of Probus had now suppressed all the foreign and domestic enemies of the state. His mild but steady administration confirmed the re-establishment of the public tranquillity; nor was there left in the provinces a hostile barbarian, a tyrant, or even a robber, to revive the memory of past disorders. It was time that the emperor should revisit Rome, and celebrate his own glory and the general happiness. The triumph due to the valour of Probus was conducted with a magnificence suitable to his fortune; and the people, who had so lately admired the trophies of Aurelian, gazed with equal pleasure on those of his heroic successor.⁵⁵ We cannot on this occasion forget the desperate courage of about fourscore gladiators, reserved, with near six hundred others, for the inhuman sports of the amphitheatre. Disdaining to shed their blood for the amusement of the populace, they killed their keepers, broke from the place of their confinement, and filled the streets of Rome with blood and confusion. After an obstinate resistance, they were overpowered and cut in pieces by the regular forces; but they obtained at least an honourable death, and the satisfaction of a just revenge.⁵⁶

The military discipline which reigned in the camps of Probus was less cruel than that of Aurelian, but it was equally rigid and exact. The latter had punished the irregularities of

A.D. 280,
of Bonosus
and Pro-
culus in
Gaul.

A.D. 281.
Triumph of
the emperor
Probus.

His disci-
pline.

⁵³ A very surprising instance is recorded of the prowess of Proculus. He had taken one hundred Sarmatian virgins. The rest of the story he must relate in his own language: *Ex his unâ nocte decem inivi; omnes tamen, quod in me erat, mulieres intra dies quindecim reddidi.* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246 [in Proculo, 12].

⁵⁴ Proculus, who was a native of Albengue on the Genoese coast, armed two thousand of his own slaves. His riches were great, but they were acquired by robbery. It was afterwards a saying of his family, *sibi non placere esse vel principes vel latrones* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 247 [in Proculo, 13].

⁵⁵ Hist. August. p. 240. [Vopisc. in Probo, c. 19.]

⁵⁶ Zosim. l. i. [c. 71] p. 66.

the soldiers with unrelenting severity, the former prevented them by employing the legions in constant and useful labours. When Probus commanded in Egypt, he executed many considerable works for the splendour and benefit of that rich country. The navigation of the Nile, so important to Rome itself, was improved; and temples, bridges, porticoes, and palaces, were constructed by the hands of the soldiers, who acted by turns as architects, as engineers, and as husbandmen.⁵⁷ It was reported of Hannibal that, in order to preserve his troops from the dangerous temptations of idleness, he had obliged them to form large plantations of olive-trees along the coast of Africa.⁵⁸ From a similar principle, Probus exercised his legions in covering with rich vineyards the hills of Gaul and Pannonia, and two considerable spots are described which were entirely dug and planted by military labour.⁵⁹ One of these, known under the name of Mount Alma, was situated near Sirmium, the country where Probus was born, for which he ever retained a partial affection, and whose gratitude he endeavoured to secure, by converting into tillage a large and unhealthy tract of marshy ground. An army thus employed constituted perhaps the most useful as well as the bravest portion of Roman subjects.

But, in the prosecution of a favourite scheme, the best of men, satisfied with the rectitude of their intentions, are subject to forget the bounds of moderation; nor did Probus him-^{His death.}self sufficiently consult the patience and disposition of his fierce legionaries.⁶⁰ The dangers of the military profession seem only to be compensated by a life of pleasure and idleness; but if the duties of the soldier are incessantly aggravated by the labours of the peasant, he will at last sink under the intolerable burden or shake it off with indignation. The imprudence of Probus is said to have inflamed the discontent of his troops. More attentive to the interests of mankind than to those of the army, he expressed the vain hope that, by the establishment of universal peace, he should soon abolish the necessity of a standing and mercenary force.⁶¹ The unguarded ex-

⁵⁷ Hist. August. p. 236. [Vopisc. in Probo, c. 9.]

⁵⁸ Aurel. Victor. in Prob. [De Cæsar. c. 37.] But the policy of Hannibal, unnoticed by any more ancient writer, is irreconcilable with the history of his life. He left Africa when he was nine years old, returned to it when he was forty-five, and immediately lost his army in the decisive battle of Zama. Livius, xxx. 35.

⁵⁹ Hist. August. p. 240. [Vopisc. Probus, c. 18.] Eutrop. ix. 17 [7]. Aurel. Victor. in Prob. Victor Junior. He revoked the prohibition of Domitian, and granted a general permission of planting vines to the Gauls, the Britons, and the Pannonians.

⁶⁰ Julian [Cæsares, p. 314] bestows a severe, and indeed excessive, censure on the rigour of Probus, who, as he thinks, almost deserved his fate.

⁶¹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 241 [in Probo, c. 20]. He lavishes on this idle hope a large stock of very foolish eloquence.

pression proved fatal to him. In one of the hottest days of summer, as he severely urged the unwholesome labour of draining the marshes of Sirmium, the soldiers, impatient of fatigue, on a sudden threw down their tools, grasped their arms, and broke out into a furious mutiny. The emperor, conscious of his danger, took refuge in a lofty tower constructed for the purpose of surveying the progress of the work.⁶² The tower was instantly forced, and a thousand swords were plunged at once into the bosom of the unfortunate Probus. The rage of the troops subsided as soon as it had been gratified. They then lamented their fatal rashness, forgot the severity of the emperor whom they had massacred, and hastened to perpetuate, by an honourable monument, the memory of his virtues and victories.^{63 a}

When the legions had indulged their grief and repentance for the death of Probus, their unanimous consent declared Carus, his Prætorian præfect, the most deserving of the Imperial throne. Every circumstance that relates to this prince appears of a mixed and doubtful nature. He gloried in the title of Roman Citizen; and affected to compare the purity of *his* blood with the foreign, and even barbarous, origin of the preceding emperors; yet the most inquisitive of his contemporaries, very far from admitting his claim, have variously deduced his own birth, or that of his parents, from Illyricum, from Gaul, or from Africa.⁶⁴ Though a soldier, he had received a learned education; though a senator, he was invested with the first dignity of the army; and in an age when the civil and military professions began to be irrecoverably separated from each other, they were united in the person of Carus. Notwithstanding the severe justice which he exercised against the assassins of Probus, to whose favour and esteem he was highly indebted, he could not escape the suspicion of being accessory to a deed from whence he derived the principal advantage. He enjoyed, at least before his elevation, an acknowledged character of virtue and abilities;⁶⁵ but his austere temper insensibly degenerated into moroseness and cruelty;

⁶² *Turris ferrata*. It seems to have been a moveable tower, and cased with iron.

⁶³ [Hic] Probus, et vere probus situs est; Victor omnium gentium Barbararum: victor etiam tyrannorum. [Vopisc. Prob. c. 21.]

⁶⁴ Yet all this may be conciliated. He was born at Narbonne in Illyricum, founded by Eutropius with the more famous city of that name in Gaul. His father might be an African, and his mother a noble Roman. Carus himself was educated in the capital. See Scaliger, *Animadversion. ad Euseb. Chron.* p. 241.

⁶⁵ Probus had requested of the senate an equestrian statue and a marble palace, at the public expense, as a just recompense of the singular merit of Carus. Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 249 [in Caro, c. 6].

^a Probus survived Aug. 29, A.D. 282, at Alexandria. See Clinton, *Fasti Rom.* because coins after that date were issued vol. i. p. 322.—S.

and the imperfect writers of his life almost hesitate whether they shall not rank him in the number of Roman tyrants.⁶⁶ When Carus assumed the purple he was about sixty years of age, and his two sons, Carinus and Numerian, had already attained the season of manhood.⁶⁷

The authority of the senate expired with Probus; nor was the repentance of the soldiers displayed by the same dutiful regard for the civil power which they had testified after the unfortunate death of Aurelian. The election of Carus was decided without expecting the approbation of the senate, and the new emperor contented himself with announcing, in a cold and stately epistle, that he had ascended the vacant throne.⁶⁸ A behaviour so very opposite to that of his amiable predecessor afforded no favourable presage of the new reign: and the Romans, deprived of power and freedom, asserted their privilege of licentious murmurs.⁶⁹ The voice of congratulation and flattery was not however silent; and we may still peruse, with pleasure and contempt, an eclogue which was composed on the accession of the emperor Carus. Two shepherds, avoiding the noontide heat, retire into the cave of Faunus. On a spreading beech they discover some recent characters. The rural deity had described, in prophetic verses, the felicity promised to the empire under the reign of so great a prince. Faunus hails the approach of that hero, who, receiving on his shoulders the sinking weight of the Roman world, shall extinguish war and faction, and once again restore the innocence and security of the golden age.⁷⁰

The sentiments of the senate and people.

It is more than probable that these elegant trifles never reached the ears of a veteran general who, with the consent of the legions, was preparing to execute the long-suspended design of the Persian war. Before his departure for this distant expedition, Carus conferred on his two sons, Carinus and Numerian, the title of Cæsar, and, investing the former with almost an equal share of the Imperial power, directed the young prince first to suppress some troubles which had arisen in Gaul, and afterwards to fix the seat of his residence at Rome, and to assume the government of the Western provinces.⁷¹ The safety of Illyricum

Carus defeats the Sarmatians, and marches into the East.

⁶⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 242, 249 [in Probo, c. 24; in Caro, c. 3]. Julian excludes the emperor Carus and both his sons from the banquet of the Cæsars.

⁶⁷ John Malala, tom. i. p. 401 [ed. Oxon.; p. 129, ed. Ven.; p. 303, ed. Bonn]. But the authority of that ignorant Greek is very slight. He ridiculously derives from Carus the city of Carrhæ and the province of Caria, the latter of which is mentioned by Homer.

⁶⁸ Hist. August. p. 249. [Vopisc. Carus, c. 5.] Carus congratulated the senate that one of their own order was made emperor.

⁶⁹ Hist. August. p. 242. [Vopisc. Probus, c. 24.]

⁷⁰ See the first eclogue of Calpurnius. The design of it is preferred by Fontenelle to that of Virgil's *Pollio*. See tom. iii. p. 148. [See note, p. 28.—S.]

⁷¹ Hist. August. p. 250. [Vopisc. Carus, c. 7.] Eutropius, ix. 18 [12]. *Pagi. Annal.*

was confirmed by a memorable defeat of the Sarmatians; sixteen thousand of those barbarians remained on the field of battle, and the number of captives amounted to twenty thousand. The old emperor, animated with the fame and prospect of victory, pursued his march, in the midst of winter, through the countries of Thrace and Asia Minor, and at length, with his younger son Numerian, arrived on the confines of the Persian monarchy. There, encamping on the summit of a lofty mountain, he pointed out to his troops the opulence and luxury of the enemy whom they were about to invade.

The successor of Artaxerxes,^a Varanes, or Bahram, though he had subdued the Segestans, one of the most warlike nations of Upper Asia,⁷² was alarmed at the approach of the Romans, and endeavoured to retard their progress by a negotiation of peace. His ambassadors entered the camp about sunset, at the time when the troops were satisfying their hunger with a frugal repast. The Persians expressed their desire of being introduced to the presence of the Roman emperor. They were at length conducted to a soldier who was seated on the grass. A piece of stale bacon and a few hard peas composed his supper. A coarse woollen garment of purple was the only circumstance that announced his dignity. The conference was conducted with the same disregard of courtly elegance. Carus, taking off a cap which he wore to conceal his baldness, assured the ambassadors that, unless their master acknowledged the superiority of Rome, he would speedily render Persia as naked of trees as his own head was destitute of hair.⁷³ Notwithstanding some traces of art and preparation, we may discover in this scene the manners of Carus, and the severe simplicity which the martial princes who suc-

⁷² Agathias, l. iv. p. 135 [ed. Paris; p. 94, ed. Ven.; c. 24, p. 261, ed. Bonn]. We find one of his sayings in the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of M. d'Herbelot. "The definition of humanity includes all other virtues." ^b

⁷³ Synesius tells this story of Carinus; and it is much more natural to understand it of Carus than (as Petavius and Tillemont choose to do) of Probus.

^a Three monarchs had intervened, Sapor (Shahpour), Hormisdas (Hormooz), Varanes or Baharam the First.—M. [See vol. i. p. 348.—S.]

^b The manner in which his life was saved by the Chief Pontiff from a conspiracy of his nobles is as remarkable as his saying. "By the advice (of the pontiff) all the nobles absented themselves from court. The king wandered through his palace alone: he saw no one: all was silence around. He became alarmed and distressed. At last the Chief Pontiff appeared, and bowed his head in apparent misery, but spoke not a word. The king entreated him to declare what had happened. The virtuous man boldly related

all that had passed, and conjured Bahram, in the name of his glorious ancestors, to change his conduct and save himself from destruction. The king was much moved, professed himself most penitent, and said he was resolved his future life should prove his sincerity. The overjoyed High-Priest, delighted at this success, made a signal, at which all the nobles and attendants were in an instant, as if by magic, in their usual places. The monarch now perceived that only one opinion prevailed on his past conduct. He repeated therefore to his nobles all he had said to the Chief Pontiff, and his future reign was unstained by cruelty or oppression." Malcolin's Persia, i. 79.—M.

ceeded Gallienus had already restored in the Roman camps. The ministers of the Great King trembled and retired.

The threats of Carus were not without effect. He ravaged Mesopotamia, cut in pieces whatever opposed his passage, made himself master of the great cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon (which seem to have surrendered without resistance), and carried his victorious arms beyond the Tigris.⁷⁴ He had seized the favourable moment for an invasion. The Persian councils were distracted by domestic factions, and the greater part of their forces were detained on the frontiers of India. Rome and the East received with transport the news of such important advantages. Flattery and hope painted in the most lively colours the fall of Persia, the conquest of Arabia, the submission of Egypt, and a lasting deliverance from the inroads of the Scythian nations.⁷⁵ But the reign of Carus was destined to expose the vanity of predictions. They were scarcely uttered before they were contradicted by his death; an event attended with such ambiguous circumstances that it may be related

His victories
and extraor-
dinary death.

A.D. 233.
Dec. 25.

in a letter from his own secretary to the præfect of the city. "Carus," says he, "our dearest emperor, was confined by sickness to his bed, when a furious tempest arose in the camp. The darkness which overspread the sky was so thick that we could no longer distinguish each other; and the incessant flashes of lightning took from us the knowledge of all that passed in the general confusion. Immediately after the most violent clap of thunder we heard a sudden cry that the emperor was dead; and it soon appeared that his chamberlains, in a rage of grief, had set fire to the royal pavilion, a circumstance which gave rise to the report that Carus was killed by lightning. But, as far as we have been able to

⁷⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. [Vopisc. Carus, c. 8.] Eutropius, ix. 18 [12]. The two Victors.

⁷⁵ To the Persian victory of Carus, I refer the dialogue of the *Philopatris*, which has so long been an object of dispute among the learned. But to explain and justify my opinion would require a dissertation."

^a Niebuhr, in the new edition of the Byzantine Historians (vol. xi.), has boldly assigned the *Philopatris* to the tenth century, and to the reign of Nicephorus Phocas. An opinion so decisively pronounced by Niebuhr, and favourably received by Hase, the learned editor of Leo Diaconus, commands respectful consideration. But the whole tone of the work appears to me altogether inconsistent with any period in which philosophy did not stand, as it were, on some ground of equality with Christianity. The doctrine of the Trinity is sarcastically introduced rather as the strange doctrine of a new religion than the established tenet of a faith universally

prevalent. The argument, adopted from Solanus, concerning the formula of the procession of the Holy Ghost, is utterly worthless, as it is a mere quotation in the words of the Gospel of St. John, xv. 26. The only argument of any value is the historic one, from the allusion to the recent violation of many virgins in the island of Crete. But neither is the language of Niebuhr quite accurate, nor his reference to the Acroases of Theodosius satisfactory. When then could this occurrence take place? Why not in the devastation of the island by the Gothic pirates, during the reign of Claudius? Trebell. Pollio, Claud. c. 12.

"investigate the truth, his death was the natural effect of his disorder." ⁷⁶

The vacancy of the throne was not productive of any disturbance. The ambition of the aspiring generals was checked by their mutual fears; and young Numerian, with his absent brother Carinus, were unanimously acknowledged as Roman emperors. The public expected that the successor of Carus would pursue his father's footsteps, and, without allowing the Persians to recover from their consternation, would advance sword in hand to the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana.⁷⁷ But the legions, however strong in numbers and discipline, were dismayed by the most abject superstition. Notwithstanding all the arts that were practised to disguise the manner of the late emperor's death, it was found impossible to remove the opinion of the multitude, and the power of opinion is irresistible. Places or persons struck with lightning were considered by the ancients with pious horror, as singularly devoted to the wrath of Heaven.⁷⁸ An oracle was remembered which marked the river Tigris as the fatal boundary of the Roman arms. The troops, terrified with the fate of Carus and with their own danger, called aloud on young Numerian to obey the will of the gods, and to lead them away from this inauspicious scene of war. The feeble emperor was unable to subdue their obstinate prejudice, and the Persians wondered at the unexpected retreat of a victorious enemy.⁷⁹

The intelligence of the mysterious fate of the late emperor was soon carried from the frontiers of Persia to Rome; and the senate, as well as the provinces, congratulated the accession of the sons of Carus. These fortunate youths were strangers, however, to that conscious superiority, either of birth or of merit, which can alone render the possession of a throne easy, and as it were natural. Born and educated in a private station, the election of their father raised them at once to the rank of princes; and his death, which happened about sixteen months afterwards, left them the unexpected legacy of a vast empire. To sustain with temper this rapid elevation, an uncommon share of virtue and prudence was requisite; and Carinus, the elder of the brothers, was more than commonly deficient in those qualities. In the Gallic war he discovered some degree of personal courage;⁸⁰ but from the moment of

⁷⁶ Hist. August. p. 250. [Vopisc. Carus, c. 8.] Yet Eutropius, Festus, Rufus, the two Victors, Jerome, Sidonius Apollinaris, Syncellus, and Zonaras, all ascribe the death of Carus to lightning. ⁷⁷ See Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v. 71, &c.

⁷⁸ See Festus and his commentators, on the word *Scribonianum*. Places struck by lightning were surrounded with a wall; things were buried with mysterious ceremony.

⁷⁹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. [Carus, c. 9.] Aurelius Victor seems to believe the prediction, and to approve the retreat.

⁸⁰ Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v. 69. He was a contemporary, but a poet.

his arrival at Rome he abandoned himself to the luxury of the capital, and to the abuse of his fortune. He was soft, yet cruel; devoted to pleasure, but destitute of taste; and, though exquisitely susceptible of vanity, indifferent to the public esteem. In the course of a few months he successively married and divorced nine wives, most of whom he left pregnant; and, notwithstanding this legal inconstancy, found time to indulge such a variety of irregular appetites as brought dishonour on himself and on the noblest houses of Rome. He beheld with inveterate hatred all those who might remember his former obscurity, or censure his present conduct. He banished or put to death the friends and counsellors whom his father had placed about him to guide his inexperienced youth; and he persecuted with the meanest revenge his schoolfellows and companions who had not sufficiently respected the latent majesty of the emperor. With the senators Carinus affected a lofty and regal demeanour, frequently declaring that he designed to distribute their estates among the populace of Rome. From the dregs of that populace he selected his favourites, and even his ministers. The palace, and even the Imperial table, was filled with singers, dancers, prostitutes, and all the various retinue of vice and folly. One of his doorkeepers⁸¹ he intrusted with the government of the city. In the room of the Prætorian præfect, whom he put to death, Carinus substituted one of the ministers of his looser pleasures. Another, who possessed the same or even a more infamous title to favour, was invested with the consulship. A confidential secretary, who had acquired uncommon skill in the art of forgery, delivered the indolent emperor, with his own consent, from the irksome duty of signing his name.

When the emperor Carus undertook the Persian war, he was induced, by motives of affection as well as policy, to secure the fortunes of his family by leaving in the hands of his eldest son the armies and provinces of the West. The intelligence which he soon received of the conduct of Carinus filled him with shame and regret; nor had he concealed his resolution of satisfying the republic by a severe act of justice, and of adopting, in the place of an unworthy son, the brave and virtuous Constantius, who at that time was governor of Dalmatia. But the elevation of Constantius was for a while deferred; and as soon as the father's death had released Carinus from the control of fear or decency, he displayed to the Romans the extravagancies of Elagabalus, aggravated by the cruelty of Domitian.⁸²

⁸¹ *Cancellarius*. This word, so humble in its origin, has by a singular fortune risen into the title of the first great office of state in the monarchies of Europe. See Casaubon and Salmasius, ad Hist. August. p. 253. [Vopisc. Carinus. c. 15.]

⁸² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 253, 254. [*id. ib.* c. 15, 16.] Eutropius, ix. 19 [13]. Victor Junior. The reign of Diocletian indeed was so long and prosperous, that it must have been very unfavourable to the reputation of Carinus.

The only merit of the administration of Carinus that history could record, or poetry celebrate, was the uncommon splendour with which, in his own and his brother's name, he exhibited the Roman games of the theatre, the circus, and the amphitheatre. More than twenty years afterwards, when the courtiers of Diocletian represented to their frugal sovereign the fame and popularity of his munificent predecessor, he acknowledged that the reign of Carinus had indeed been a reign of pleasure.⁸³ But this vain prodigality, which the prudence of Diocletian might justly despise, was enjoyed with surprise and transport by the Roman people. The oldest of the citizens, recollecting the spectacles of former days, the triumphal pomp of Probus or Aurelian, and the secular games of the emperor Philip, acknowledged that they were all surpassed by the superior magnificence of Carinus.⁸⁴

The spectacles of Carinus may therefore be best illustrated by the observation of some particulars which history has condescended to relate concerning those of his predecessors. If we confine ourselves solely to the hunting of wild beasts, however we may censure the vanity of the design or the cruelty of the execution, we are obliged to confess that neither before nor since the time of the Romans so much art and expense have ever been lavished for the amusement of the people.⁸⁵ By the order of Probus, a great quantity of large trees, torn up by the roots, were transplanted into the midst of the circus. The spacious and shady forest was immediately filled with a thousand ostriches, a thousand stags, a thousand fallow-deer, and a thousand wild boars; and all this variety of game was abandoned to the riotous impetuosity of the multitude. The tragedy of the succeeding day consisted in the massacre of an hundred lions, an equal number of lionesses, two hundred leopards, and three hundred bears.⁸⁶ The collection prepared by the younger Gordian for his triumph, and which his successor exhibited in the secular games, was less remarkable by the number than by the singularity of the animals. Twenty zebras displayed their elegant forms and variegated beauty to the eyes of the Roman people.⁸⁷ Ten elks, and as many camelopard, the loftiest and most harmless creatures that wander over the plains of Sarmatia and Æthiopia, were contrasted with thirty African

⁸³ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 254 [in Carino, 19]. He calls him Carus, but the sense is sufficiently obvious, and the words were often confounded.

⁸⁴ See Calpurnius, Eclog. vii. 43. We may observe that the spectacles of Probus were still recent, and that the poet is seconded by the historian.

⁸⁵ The philosopher Montaigne (Essays, l. iii. 6) gives a very just and lively view of Roman magnificence in these spectacles.

⁸⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 240. [Probus, c. 19.]

⁸⁷ They are called *Onagri*; but the number is too inconsiderable for mere wild asses. Cuper (de Elephantis Exercitat. ii. 7) has proved from Oppian, Dion, and an anonymous Greek, that zebras had been seen at Rome. They were brought from some island of the ocean, perhaps Madagascar.

hyænas and ten Indian tigers, the most implacable savages of the torrid zone. The unoffending strength with which Nature has endowed the greater quadrupeds was admired in the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus of the Nile,⁸⁸ and a majestic troop of thirty-two elephants.⁸⁹ While the populace gazed with stupid wonder on the splendid show, the naturalist might indeed observe the figure and properties of so many different species, transported from every part of the ancient world into the amphitheatre of Rome. But this accidental benefit which science might derive from folly is surely insufficient to justify such a wanton abuse of the public riches. There occurs, however, a single instance in the first Punic war in which the senate wisely connected this amusement of the multitude with the interest of the state. A considerable number of elephants, taken in the defeat of the Carthaginian army, were driven through the circus by a few slaves, armed only with blunt javelins.⁹⁰ The useful spectacle served to impress the Roman soldier with a just contempt for those unwieldy animals; and he no longer dreaded to encounter them in the ranks of war.

The hunting or exhibition of wild beasts was conducted with a magnificence suitable to a people who styled themselves the masters of the world; nor was the edifice appropriated to that entertainment less expressive of Roman greatness. Posterity admires, and will long admire, the awful remains of the amphitheatre of Titus, which so well deserved the epithet of Colossal.⁹¹ It was a building of an elliptic figure, five hundred and sixty-four feet in length, and four hundred and sixty-seven in breadth, founded on fourscore arches, and rising, with four successive orders of architecture, to the height of one hundred and forty feet.⁹² The outside of the edifice was encrusted with marble and decorated with statues. The slopes of the vast concave, which formed the inside, were filled and surrounded with sixty or eighty rows of seats, of marble likewise, covered with cushions, and capable of receiving with ease above fourscore thousand spectators.⁹³ Sixty-four *vomitories* (for by that name

The amphitheatre.

⁸⁸ Carinus gave an hippopotamus (see Calpurn. Eclog. vii. 66). In the latter spectacles I do not recollect any crocodiles, of which Augustus once exhibited thirty-six. Dion Cassius, l. lv. [c. 10] p. 781.

⁸⁹ Capitolin. in Hist. August. p. 164, 165. [Gordian. III. c. 33.] We are not acquainted with the animals which he calls *archeleontes*; some read *argoleontes*, others *argileontes*: both corrections are very nugatory.

⁹⁰ Plin. Hist. Natur. viii. 6, from the annals of Piso.

⁹¹ See Maffei, Verona Illustrata, p. iv. l. i. c. 2.

⁹² Maffei, l. ii. c. 2. The height was very much exaggerated by the ancients. It reached almost to the heavens, according to Calpurnius (Eclog. vii. 23); and surpassed the ken of human sight, according to Ammianus Marcellinus (xvi. 10). Yet how trifling to the great pyramid of Egypt, which rises 500 feet perpendicular! [The height was 157 feet. See Smith's Dict. of Antiq. p. 86.—S.]

⁹³ According to different copies of Victor, we read 77,000 or 87,000 spectators; but

the doors were very aptly distinguished) poured forth the immense multitude; and the entrances, passages, and staircases were contrived with such exquisite skill, that each person, whether of the senatorial, the equestrian, or the plebeian order, arrived at his destined place without trouble or confusion.⁹⁴ Nothing was omitted which, in any respect, could be subservient to the convenience and pleasure of the spectators. They were protected from the sun and rain by an ample canopy, occasionally drawn over their heads. The air was continually refreshed by the playing of fountains, and profusely impregnated by the grateful scent of aromatics. In the centre of the edifice, the *arena*, or stage, was strewed with the finest sand, and successively assumed the most different forms. At one moment it seemed to rise out of the earth, like the garden of the Hesperides, and was afterwards broken into the rocks and caverns of Thrace. The subterraneous pipes conveyed an inexhaustible supply of water; and what had just before appeared a level plain, might be suddenly converted into a wide lake, covered with armed vessels, and replenished with the monsters of the deep.⁹⁵ In the decoration of these scenes the Roman emperors displayed their wealth and liberality; and we read on various occasions that the whole furniture of the amphitheatre consisted either of silver, or of gold, or of amber.⁹⁶ The poet who describes the games of Carinus, in the character of a shepherd attracted to the capital by the fame of their magnificence, affirms that the nets designed as a defence against the wild beasts were of gold wire; that the porticoes were gilded; and that the *belt* or circle which divided the several ranks of spectators from each other was studded with a precious mosaic of beautiful stones.⁹⁷

In the midst of this glittering pageantry, the emperor Carinus, secure of his fortune, enjoyed the acclamations of the people, the flattery of his courtiers, and the songs of the poets, who, for want of a more essential merit, were reduced to celebrate the divine graces of his person.⁹⁸ In the same hour, but at the distance of nine hundred miles from Rome, his brother expired; and a sudden

A.D. 284.
Sept. 12.

Maffei (l. ii. c. 12) finds room on the open seats for no more than 34,000. The remainder were contained in the upper covered galleries.

⁹⁴ See Maffei, l. ii. c. 5-12. He treats the very difficult subject with all possible clearness, and like an architect as well as an antiquarian.

⁹⁵ Calpurn. Eclog. vii. 64-73. These lines are curious, and the whole eclogue has been of infinite use to Maffei. Calpurnius, as well as Martial (see his first book), was a poet; but when they described the amphitheatre, they both wrote from their own senses, and to those of the Romans.

⁹⁶ Consult Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 16, xxxvii. 11.

⁹⁷ Balteus en gemmis, en inlita porticus auro
Certatim radiant, &c. Calpurn. vii. [v. 47.]

⁹⁸ Et Martis vultus et Apollinis esse putavi, says Calpurnius [Eclog. vii. 83]; but John Malala, who had perhaps seen pictures of Carinus, describes him as thick, short, and white, tom. i. p. 403.

revolution transferred into the hands of a stranger the sceptre of the house of Carus.⁹⁹

The sons of Carus never saw each other after their father's death. The arrangements which their new situation required were probably deferred till the return of the younger brother to Rome, where a triumph was decreed to the young emperors for the glorious success of the Persian war.¹⁰⁰ It is uncertain whether they intended to divide between them the administration or the provinces of the empire; but it is very unlikely that their union would have proved of any long duration. The jealousy of power must have been inflamed by the opposition of characters. In the most corrupt of times Carinus was unworthy to live: Numerian deserved to reign in a happier period. His affable manners and gentle virtues secured him, as soon as they became known, the regard and affections of the public. He possessed the elegant accomplishments of a poet and orator, which dignify as well as adorn the humblest and the most exalted station. His eloquence, however it was applauded by the senate, was formed not so much on the model of Cicero as on that of the modern declaimers; but in an age very far from being destitute of poetical merit, he contended for the prize with the most celebrated of his contemporaries, and still remained the friend of his rivals; a circumstance which evinces either the goodness of his heart, or the superiority of his genius.¹⁰¹ But the talents of Numerian were rather of the contemplative than of the active kind. When his father's elevation reluctantly forced him from the shade of retirement, neither his temper nor his pursuits had qualified him for the command of armies. His constitution was destroyed by the hardships of the Persian war; and he had contracted, from the heat of the climate,¹⁰² such a weakness in his eyes, as obliged him, in the course of a long retreat, to confine himself to the solitude and darkness of a tent or litter. The administration of all affairs, civil as well as military, was devolved on Arrius Aper, the Prætorian præfect, who, to the power of his important office, added the honour of being father-in-law to Numerian. The Imperial pavilion was strictly guarded by his most trusty adherents; and

Return of
Numerian
with the
army from
Persia.

⁹⁹ With regard to the time when these Roman games were celebrated, Scaliger, Salmasius, and Cuper have given themselves a great deal of trouble to perplex a very clear subject.

¹⁰⁰ Nemesianus (in the *Cynegeticon* [v. 80, *seqq.*]) seems to anticipate in his fancy that auspicious day.

¹⁰¹ He won all the crowns from Nemesianus, with whom he vied in didactic poetry. The senate erected a statue to the son of Carus, with a very ambiguous inscription, "To the most powerful of orators." See Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 251. [Numerian. c. 11.]

¹⁰² A more natural cause, at least, than that assigned by Vopiscus (*Hist. August.* p. 251 [Numerian. c. 12]), incessantly weeping for his father's death.

during many days Aper delivered to the army the supposed mandates of their invisible sovereign.¹⁰³

It was not till eight months after the death of Carus, that the Roman army, returning by slow marches from the banks of the Tigris, arrived on those of the Thracian Bosphorus. The legions halted at Chalcedon in Asia, while the court passed over to Heraclea, on the European side of the Propontis.¹⁰⁴ But a report soon circulated through the camp, at first in secret whispers, and at length in loud clamours, of the emperor's death, and of the presumption of his ambitious minister, who still exercised the sovereign power in the name of a prince who was no more. The impatience of the soldiers could not long support a state of suspense. With rude curiosity they broke into the imperial tent, and discovered only the corpse of Numerian.¹⁰⁵ The gradual decline of his health might have induced them to believe that his death was natural; but the concealment was interpreted as an evidence of guilt, and the measures which Aper had taken to secure his election became the immediate occasion of his ruin. Yet, even in the transport of their rage and grief, the troops observed a regular proceeding, which proves how firmly discipline had been re-established by the martial successors of Gallienus. A general assembly of the army was appointed to be held at Chalcedon, whither Aper was transported in chains, as a prisoner and a criminal. A vacant tribunal was erected in the midst of the camp, and the generals and tribunes formed a great military council. They soon announced to the multitude that their choice had fallen on Diocletian, commander of the domestics or body-guards, as the person the most capable of revenging and succeeding their beloved emperor. The future fortunes of the candidate depended on the chance or conduct of the present hour. Conscious that the station which he had filled exposed him to some suspicions, Diocletian ascended the tribunal, and, raising his eyes towards the Sun, made a solemn profession of his own innocence, in the presence of that all-seeing Deity.¹⁰⁶ Then, assuming the tone of a sovereign and a judge, he commanded that Aper should be brought in chains to the foot of the tribunal. "This man," said he, "is the murderer of Numerian;" and without giving him time to

A.D. 284.
Sept. 17.

Election of
the emperor
Diocletian.

¹⁰³ In the Persian war Aper was suspected of a design to betray Carus. Hist. August. p. 250. [Vopiscus, Carus, c. 8.]

¹⁰⁴ We are obliged to the Alexandrian Chronicle, p. 274, for the knowledge of the time and place where Diocletian was elected emperor.

¹⁰⁵ Hist. August. p. 251. [Vopisc. Numer. c. 12.] Eutrop. ix. 88 [c. 12]. Hieronym. in Chron. According to these judicious writers, the death of Numerian was discovered by the stench of his dead body. Could no aromatics be found in the Imperial household?

¹⁰⁶ Aurel. Victor. [De Cæsar. c. 39.] Eutropius, ix. 20 [c. 13]. Hieronym. in Chron.

enter on a dangerous justification, drew his sword, and buried it in the breast of the unfortunate præfect. A charge supported by such decisive proof was admitted without contradiction, and the legions, with repeated acclamations, acknowledged the justice and authority of the emperor Diocletian.¹⁰⁷

Before we enter upon the memorable reign of that prince, it will be proper to punish and dismiss the unworthy brother of Numerian. Carinus possessed arms and treasures sufficient Defeat and death of Carinus. to support his legal title to the empire. But his personal vices overbalanced every advantage of birth and situation. The most faithful servants of the father despised the incapacity, and dreaded the cruel arrogance of the son. The hearts of the people were engaged in favour of his rival, and even the senate was inclined to prefer an usurper to a tyrant. The arts of Diocletian inflamed the general discontent; and the winter was employed in secret intrigues and open preparations for a civil war. In the spring the forces A.D. 285. May.^a of the East and of the West encountered each other in the plains of Margus, a small city of Mæsia, in the neighbourhood of the Danube.¹⁰⁸ The troops, so lately returned from the Persian war, had acquired their glory at the expense of health and numbers, nor were they in a condition to contend with the unexhausted strength of the legions of Europe. Their ranks were broken, and, for a moment, Diocletian despaired of the purple and of life. But the advantage which Carinus had obtained by the valour of his soldiers he quickly lost by the infidelity of his officers. A tribune, whose wife he had seduced, seized the opportunity of revenge, and by a single blow extinguished civil discord in the blood of the adulterer.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 252. [Numer. c. 13.] The reason why Diocletian killed *Aper* (a wild boar) was founded on a prophecy and a pun, as foolish as they are well known. [Vopisc. l. c.]

¹⁰⁸ Eutropius [lib. ix. c. 13] marks its situation very accurately; it was between the Mons Aureus and Viminacum. M. d'Anville (Géographie Ancienne, tom. i. p. 304) places Margus at Kastolatz in Servia, a little below Belgrade and Semendria.^b

¹⁰⁹ Hist. August. p. 254. [Vopisc. Carin. c. 17.] Eutropius, ix. 20 [13]. Aurelius Victor. Victor in Epitome.

* This date is only conjectural; for though Carinus must have been slain in this year, there is no evidence to determine the month.—S.

^b Placed by others at Semendria or Passarowitz. See Forbiger, Handbuch der alten Geographie, vol. iii. p. 1092.—S.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REIGN OF DIOCLETIAN AND HIS THREE ASSOCIATES, MAXIMIAN, GALE-
RIUS, AND CONSTANTIUS — GENERAL RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF ORDER AND
TRANQUILLITY — THE PERSIAN WAR, VICTORY, AND TRIUMPH — THE NEW
FORM OF ADMINISTRATION — ABDICATION AND RETIREMENT OF DIOCLETIAN
AND MAXIMIAN.

As the reign of Diocletian was more illustrious than that of any of
his predecessors, so was his birth more abject and obscure. The strong claims of merit and of violence had frequently superseded the ideal prerogatives of nobility; but a distinct line of separation was hitherto preserved between the free and the servile part of mankind. The parents of Diocletian had been slaves in the house of Anulinus, a Roman senator; nor was he himself distinguished by any other name than that which he derived from a small town in Dalmatia, from whence his mother deduced her origin.¹ It is, however, probable that his father obtained the freedom of the family, and that he soon acquired an office of scribe, which was commonly exercised by persons of his condition.² Favourable oracles, or rather the consciousness of superior merit, prompted his aspiring son to pursue the profession of arms and the hopes of fortune; and it would be extremely curious to observe the gradation of arts and accidents which enabled him in the end to fulfil those oracles, and to display that merit to the world. Diocletian was successively promoted to the government of Mæsia, the honours of the consulship, and the important command of the guards of the palace. He distinguished his abilities in the Persian war; and after the death of Numerian, the slave, by the confession and judgment of his rivals, was declared the most worthy of the Imperial throne. The malice of religious zeal, whilst it arraigns the savage fierceness of his colleague Maximian, has affected to cast suspicions on the personal courage of the emperor Diocletian.³ It would not be easy to per-

¹ Eutrop. ix. 19 [13]. Victor in Epitome [c. 39]. The town seems to have been properly called Doclia, from a small tribe of Illyrians (see Cellarius, Geograph. Antiqua, tom. i. p. 393); and the original name of the fortunate slave was probably Docles; he first lengthened it to the Grecian harmony of Diocles, and at length to the Roman majesty of Diocletianus. He likewise assumed the Patrician name of Valerius, and it is usually given him by Aurelius Victor.

² See Dacier on the sixth satire of the second book of Horace. Cornel. Nepos, in Vit. Eumen. c. 1.

³ Lactantius (or whoever was the author of the little treatise De Mortibus Persecutorum) accuses Diocletian of *timidity* in two places, c. 7, 8. In chap. 9 he says of him, "*erat in omni tumultu meticulosus et animi disiectus.*"

suade us of the cowardice of a soldier of fortune who acquired and preserved the esteem of the legions, as well as the favour of so many warlike princes. Yet even calumny is sagacious enough to discover and to attack the most vulnerable part. The valour of Diocletian was never found inadequate to his duty, or to the occasion; but he appears not to have possessed the daring and generous spirit of a hero, who courts danger and fame, disdains artifice, and boldly challenges the allegiance of his equals. His abilities were useful rather than splendid—a vigorous mind improved by the experience and study of mankind; dexterity and application in business; a judicious mixture of liberality and economy, of mildness and rigour; profound dissimulation under the disguise of military frankness; steadiness to pursue his ends; flexibility to vary his means; and, above all, the great art of submitting his own passions, as well as those of others, to the interest of his ambition, and of colouring his ambition with the most specious pretences of justice and public utility. Like Augustus, Diocletian may be considered as the founder of a new empire. Like the adopted son of Cæsar, he was distinguished as a statesman rather than as a warrior; nor did either of those princes employ force, whenever their purpose could be effected by policy.

The victory of Diocletian was remarkable for its singular mildness. A people accustomed to applaud the clemency of the conqueror, if the usual punishments of death, exile, and confiscation were inflicted with any degree of temper and equity, beheld, with the most pleasing astonishment, a civil war, the flames of which were extinguished in the field of battle. Diocletian received into his confidence Aristobulus, the principal minister of the house of Carus, respected the lives, the fortunes, and the dignity of his adversaries, and even continued in their respective stations the greater number of the servants of Carinus.⁴ It is not improbable that motives of prudence might assist the humanity of the artful Dalmatian: of these servants, many had purchased his favour by secret treachery; in others, he esteemed their grateful fidelity to an unfortunate master. The discerning judgment of Aurelian, of Probus, and of Carus, had filled the several departments of the state and army with officers of approved merit, whose removal would have injured the public service, without promoting the interest of the successor. Such a conduct, however, displayed to the Roman world the fairest prospect of the new reign, and the emperor affected to confirm this favourable prepossession by declaring that, among all the virtues of his predecessors,

His clemency and victory.

* In this encomium Aurelius Victor seems to convey a just, though indirect, censure of the cruelty of Constantius. It appears from the *Fasti* that Aristobulus remained præfect of the city, and that he ended with Diocletian the consulship which he had commenced with Carinus.

he was the most ambitious of imitating the humane philosophy of Marcus Antoninus.⁵

The first considerable action of his reign seemed to evince his sincerity as well as his moderation. After the example of Marcus, he gave himself a colleague in the person of Maximian, on whom he bestowed at first the title of Cæsar, and afterwards that of Augustus.⁶ But the motives of his conduct, as well as the object of his choice, were of a very different nature from those of his admired predecessor. By investing a luxurious youth with the honours of the purple, Marcus had discharged a debt of private gratitude, at the expense, indeed, of the happiness of the state. By associating a friend and a fellow-soldier to the labours of government, Diocletian, in a time of public danger, provided for the defence both of the East and of the West. Maximian was born a peasant, and, like Aurelian, in the territory of Sirmium. Ignorant of letters,⁷ careless of laws, the rusticity of his appearance and manners still betrayed in the most elevated fortune the meanness of his extraction. War was the only art which he professed. In a long course of service he had distinguished himself on every frontier of the empire; and though his military talents were formed to obey rather than to command, though, perhaps, he never attained the skill of a consummate general, he was capable, by his valour, constancy, and experience, of executing the most arduous undertakings. Nor were the vices of Maximian less useful to his benefactor. Insensible to pity, and fearless of consequences, he was the ready instrument of every act of cruelty which the policy of that artful prince might at once suggest and disclaim. As soon as a bloody sacrifice had been offered to prudence or to revenge, Diocletian, by his seasonable intercession, saved the remaining few whom he had never designed to punish, gently censured the severity of his stern colleague, and enjoyed

⁵ Aurelius Victor styles Diocletian "*Parentem potius quam Dominum.*" [*De Cæsar.* 39.] See *Hist. August.* p. 30. [*Capitol. M. Anton. Phil. c. 19.*]

⁶ The question of the time when Maximian received the honours of Cæsar and Augustus has divided modern critics and given occasion to a great deal of learned wrangling. I have followed M. de Tillemont (*Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 500-505), who has weighed the several reasons and difficulties with his scrupulous accuracy.^a

⁷ In an oration delivered before him (*Panegy. Vet. i. 8*) Mamertinus expresses a doubt whether his hero, in imitating the conduct of Hannibal and Scipio, had ever heard of their names. From thence we may fairly infer that Maximian was more desirous of being considered as a soldier than as a man of letters: and it is in this manner that we can often translate the language of flattery into that of truth.^b

^a Eckhel concurs in this view, viii. p. 15.—M.

^b Gibbon's inference as to Maximian's ignorance of the story of Hannibal and Scipio seems unwarranted. All that is

meant is, "Had others told you, or did you discover for yourself, that to injure an enemy you must carry the war into his country?"—S.

the comparison of a golden and an iron age, which was universally applied to their opposite maxims of government. Notwithstanding the difference of their characters, the two emperors maintained, on the throne, that friendship which they had contracted in a private station. The haughty turbulent spirit of Maximian, so fatal afterwards to himself and to the public peace, was accustomed to respect the genius of Diocletian, and confessed the ascendant of reason over brutal violence.⁸ From a motive either of pride or superstition, the two emperors assumed the titles, the one of Jovius, the other of Hercules. Whilst the motion of the world (such was the language of their venal orators) was maintained by the all-seeing wisdom of Jupiter, the invincible arm of Hercules purged the earth from monsters and tyrants.⁹

But even the omnipotence of Jovius and Hercules was insufficient to sustain the weight of the public administration. The prudence of Diocletian discovered that the empire, assailed on every side by the barbarians, required on every side the presence of a great army and of an emperor. With this view, he resolved once more to divide his unwieldy power, and, with the inferior title of *Cæsars*,^a to confer on two generals of approved merit an equal share of the sovereign authority.¹⁰ Galerius, surnamed Armentarius, from his original profession of a herdsman, and Constantius, who from his pale complexion had acquired the denomination of Chlorus,¹¹ were the two persons invested with the second honours of the Imperial purple. In describing the country, extraction, and manners of Hercules, we have already delineated those of Galerius, who was often, and not improperly, styled the younger Maximian, though, in many instances both of virtue and ability, he appears to have possessed a manifest superiority over the elder. The birth of Constantius was less obscure than that of his colleagues. Eutropius, his father, was one of the most considerable nobles of Dardania, and his mother was the niece of the emperor

Association
of two
Cæsars,
Galerius and
Constantius.
A.D. 292.
March 1st

⁸ Lactantius de M. P. c. 8. Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39]. As among the Panegyrics we find orations pronounced in praise of Maximian, and others which flatter his adversaries at his expense, we derive some knowledge from the contrast.

⁹ See the second and third Panegyrics, particularly iii. [ii.] 3, 10, 14; but it would be tedious to copy the diffuse and affected expressions of their false eloquence. With regard to the titles, consult Aurel. Victor, Lactantius de M. P. c. 52. Spanheim de Usu Numismatum, &c. Dissertat. xii. 8.

¹⁰ Aurelius Victor. Victor in Epitome. Eutrop. ix. 22 [14]. Lactant. de M. P. c. 7. Hieronym. in Chron.

¹¹ It is only among the modern Greeks that Tillemont can discover his appellation of Chlorus. Any remarkable degree of paleness seems inconsistent with the *rubor* mentioned in Panegyric. v. 19.

^a On the relative power of the Augusti the end of Manso's *Leben Constantins des* and the Cæsars, consult a dissertation at *Grossen*.—M.

Claudius.^{12a} Although the youth of Constantius had been spent in arms, he was endowed with a mild and amiable disposition, and the popular voice had long since acknowledged him worthy of the rank which he at last attained. To strengthen the bonds of political, by those of domestic, union, each of the emperors assumed the character of a father to one of the Cæsars, Diocletian to Galerius, and Maximian to Constantius; and each, obliging them to repudiate their former wives, bestowed his daughter in marriage on his adopted son.¹³ These four princes distributed among themselves the wide extent of the Roman empire. The defence of Gaul, Spain,¹⁴ and Britain was intrusted to Constantius: Galerius was stationed on the banks of the Danube, as the safeguard of the Illyrian provinces. Italy and Africa were considered as the department of Maximian; and for his peculiar portion Diocletian reserved Thrace, Egypt, and the rich countries of Asia. Every one was sovereign within his own jurisdiction; but their united authority extended over the whole monarchy, and each of them was prepared to assist his colleagues with his counsels or presence. The Cæsars, in their exalted rank, revered the majesty of the emperors, and the three younger princes invariably acknowledged, by their gratitude and obedience, the common parent of their fortunes. The suspicious jealousy of power found not any place among them; and the singular happiness of their union has been compared to a chorus of music, whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist.¹⁵

This important measure was not carried into execution till about six years after the association of Maximian, and that interval of time had not been destitute of memorable incidents. But we have preferred, for the sake of perspicuity, first to describe the more perfect form of Diocletian's government, and afterwards to relate the actions of his reign, following rather the natural order of the events than the dates of a very doubtful chronology.

¹² Julian, the grandson of Constantius, boasts that his family was derived from the warlike Mæsiæns. Misopogon, p. 348. The Dardanians dwelt on the edge of Mæsia.

¹³ Galerius married Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian; if we speak with strictness, Theodora, the wife of Constantius, was daughter only to the wife of Maximian. Spanheim, Dissertat. xi. 2.

¹⁴ This division agrees with that of the four præfectures; yet there is some reason to doubt whether Spain was not a province of Maximian. See Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 517.^b

¹⁵ Julian in Cæsariib. p. 315. Spanheim's notes to the French translation, p. 122.

^a See the genealogical table, c. xviii.—S. division of Galerius. See Tillemont, ^b According to Aurelius Victor and other authorities, Thrace belonged to the in general dated in Illyria or Thrace.—M

The first exploit of Maximian, though it is mentioned in a few words by our imperfect writers, deserves, from its singularity, to be recorded in a history of human manners. He suppressed the peasants of Gaul, who, under the appellation of *Bagaudæ*,¹⁶ had risen in a general insurrection; very similar to those which in the fourteenth century successively afflicted both France and England.¹⁷ It should seem that very many of those institutions, referred by an easy solution to the feudal system, are derived from the Celtic barbarians. When Cæsar subdued the Gauls, that great nation was already divided into three orders of men; the clergy, the nobility, and the common people. The first governed by superstition, the second by arms, but the third and last was not of any weight or account in their public councils. It was very natural for the plebeians, oppressed by debt or apprehensive of injuries, to implore the protection of some powerful chief, who acquired over their persons and property the same absolute rights as, among the Greeks and Romans, a master exercised over his slaves.¹⁸ The greatest part of the nation was gradually reduced into a state of servitude; compelled to perpetual labour on the estates of the Gallic nobles, and confined to the soil, either by the real weight of fetters, or by the no less cruel and forcible restraints of the laws. During the long series of troubles which agitated Gaul, from the reign of Gallienus to that of Diocletian, the condition of these servile peasants was peculiarly miserable; and they experienced at once the complicated tyranny of their masters, of the barbarians, of the soldiers, and of the officers of the revenue.¹⁹

Their patience was at last provoked into despair. On every side they rose in multitudes, armed with rustic weapons, and with irresistible fury. The ploughman became a foot soldier, the shepherd mounted on horseback, the deserted villages and open towns were abandoned to the flames, and the ravages of the peasants equalled those of the fiercest barbarians.²⁰ They asserted the natural rights of men, but they asserted those rights with the most savage cruelty. The Gallic nobles, justly dreading their revenge, either took refuge in the fortified cities, or fled from the wild scene of anarchy. The peasants reigned without control; and two of their

A.D. 287.
State of the
peasants of
Gaul.

¹⁶ The general name of *Bagaudæ* (in the signification of Rebels) continued till the fifth century in Gaul. Some critics derive it from a Celtic word, *Bagad*, a tumultuous assembly. Scaliger ad Euseb. Du Cange Glossar. [Compare S. Turner, Anglo-Sax. History, i. 214.—M.]

¹⁷ Chronique de Froissart, vol. i. c. 182, ii. 73, 79. The *naïveté* of his story is lost in our best modern writers.

¹⁸ Cæsar de Bell. Gallic. vi. 13. Orgetorix, the Helvetian, could arm for his defence a body of ten thousand slaves.

¹⁹ Their oppression and misery are acknowledged by Eumenius (Panegy. vi. 8), *Gallias efferatas injuriis*.

²⁰ Panegy. Vet. ii. 4. Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39].

most daring leaders had the folly and rashness to assume the Imperial ornaments.²¹ Their power soon expired at the approach of the legions. The strength of union and discipline obtained an easy victory over a licentious and divided multitude.²² A severe retaliation was inflicted on the peasants who were found in arms: the affrighted remnant returned to their respective habitations, and their unsuccessful effort for freedom served only to confirm their slavery. So strong and uniform is the current of popular passions, that we might almost venture, from very scanty materials, to relate the particulars of this war; but we are not disposed to believe that the principal leaders, Ælianus and Amandus, were Christians,²³ or to insinuate that the rebellion, as it happened in the time of Luther, was occasioned by the abuse of those benevolent principles of Christianity, which inculcate the natural freedom of mankind.

Maximian had no sooner recovered Gaul from the hands of the peasants, than he lost Britain by the usurpation of Carausius. Ever since the rash but successful enterprise of the Franks under the reign of Probus, their daring countrymen had constructed squadrons of light brigantines, in which they incessantly ravaged the provinces adjacent to the ocean.²⁴ To repel their desultory incursions, it was found necessary to create a naval power; and the judicious measure was prosecuted with prudence and vigour. Gessoriacum, or Boulogne, in the straits of the British Channel, was chosen by the emperor for the station of the Roman fleet; and the command of it was intrusted to Carausius, a Menapian of the meanest origin,²⁵ but who had long signalised his skill as a pilot, and his valour as a soldier. The integrity of the new admiral corresponded not with his abilities. When the German pirates sailed from their own harbours, he connived at their passage, but he diligently intercepted their

²¹ Ælianus and Amandus. We have medals coined by them. Goltzius in Thes. R. A. p. 117, 121.

²² *Levibus proeliis domuit.* Eutrop. ix. 20 [13].

²³ The fact rests indeed on very slight authority, a Life of St. Babolinus, which is probably of the seventh century. See Duchesne *Scriptores Rer. Francicar.* tom. i. p. 662.

²⁴ Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39] calls them Germans. Eutropius (ix. 21 [13]) gives them the name of Saxons. But Eutropius lived in the ensuing century, and seems to use the language of his own times.^a

²⁵ The three expressions of Eutropius [ix. 13], Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. 39], and Eumenius, "*villissime natus*," "*Bataviæ alumnus*," and "*Menapiæ civis*," give us a very doubtful account of the birth of Carausius. Dr. Stukely, however (Hist. of Carausius, p. 62), chooses to make him a native of St. David's and a prince of the blood royal of Britain. The former idea he had found in Richard of Cirencester, p. 44.

^a Eutropius speaks both of Franks and Saxons. The name of Saxons occurs in the second century (Ptolem. ii. 11, §§ 11, 31), and there seems no reason to question the statement of Eutropius.—S.

^b Carausius was a German, and in his revolt seems to have calculated upon the assistance of the Germans who were already settled in Britain. Kemble, The Saxons in England, vol. i. p. 12.—S.

return, and appropriated to his own use an ample share of the spoil which they had acquired. The wealth of Carausius was, on this occasion, very justly considered as an evidence of his guilt; and Maximian had already given orders for his death. But the crafty Menapian foresaw and prevented the severity of the emperor. By his liberality he had attached to his fortunes the fleet which he commanded, and secured the barbarians in his interest. From the port of Boulogne he sailed over to Britain, persuaded the legion and the auxiliaries which guarded that island to embrace his party, and boldly assuming, with the Imperial purple, the title of Augustus, defied the justice and the arms of his injured sovereign.²⁶

When Britain was thus dismembered from the empire, its importance was sensibly felt, and its loss sincerely lamented. The Romans celebrated, and perhaps magnified, the extent of ^{Importance of Britain.} that noble island, provided on every side with convenient harbours; the temperature of the climate, and the fertility of the soil, alike adapted for the production of corn or of vines; the valuable minerals with which it abounded; its rich pastures covered with innumerable flocks, and its woods free from wild beasts or venomous serpents. Above all, they regretted the large amount of the revenue of Britain, whilst they confessed that such a province well deserved to become the seat of an independent monarchy.²⁷ During the space of seven ^{Power of Carausius.} years it was possessed by Carausius; and fortune continued propitious to a rebellion supported with courage and ability. The British emperor defended the frontiers of his dominions against the Caledonians of the North, invited, from the continent, a great number of skilful artists, and displayed, on a variety of coins that are still extant, his taste and opulence. Born on the confines of the Franks, he courted the friendship of that formidable people, by the flattering imitation of their dress and manners. The bravest of their youth he enlisted among his land or sea forces; and, in return for their useful alliance, he communicated to the barbarians the dangerous knowledge of military and naval arts. Carausius still preserved the possession of Boulogne and the adjacent country. His fleets rode triumphant in the channel, commanded the mouths of the Seine and of the Rhine, ravaged the coasts of the ocean, and diffused beyond

²⁶ Panegy. v. 12. Britain at this time was secure, and slightly guarded.

²⁷ Panegy. Vet. v. 11, vii. 9. The orator Eumenius wished to exalt the glory of the hero (Constantius) with the importance of the conquest. Notwithstanding our laudable partiality for our native country, it is difficult to conceive that, in the beginning of the fourth century, England deserved *all* these commendations. A century and a half before it hardly paid its own establishment. See Appian in Proem.

²⁸ Six years. Carausius was slain in A.D. 293, not 294, as Gibbon states. See Clinton, *Fast. Rom.* vol. i. p. 334.—S.

the Columns of Hercules the terror of his name. Under his command, Britain, destined in a future age to obtain the empire of the sea, already assumed its natural and respectable station of a maritime power.²⁸

By seizing the fleet of Boulogne, Carausius had deprived his master of the means of pursuit and revenge. And when, after a vast expense of time and labour, a new armament was launched into the water,²⁹ the Imperial troops, unaccustomed to that element, were easily baffled and defeated by the veteran sailors of the usurper. This disappointed effort was soon productive of a treaty of peace. Diocletian and his colleague, who justly dreaded the enterprising spirit of Carausius, resigned to him the sovereignty of Britain, and reluctantly admitted their perfidious servant to a participation of the Imperial honours.³⁰ But the adoption of the two Cæsars restored new vigour to the Roman arms; and while the Rhine was guarded by the presence of Maximian, his brave associate Constantius assumed the conduct of the British war. His first enterprise was against the important place of Boulogne. A stupendous mole, raised across the entrance of the harbour, intercepted all hopes of relief. The town surrendered after an obstinate defence;

and a considerable part of the naval strength of Carausius fell into the hands of the besiegers. During the three years which Constantius employed in preparing a fleet adequate to the conquest of Britain, he secured the coast of Gaul, invaded the country of the Franks, and deprived the usurper of the assistance of those powerful allies.

Before the preparations were finished, Constantius received the intelligence of the tyrant's death, and it was considered as a sure presage of the approaching victory. The servants of Carausius imitated the example of treason which he had given. He was murdered by his first minister Allectus, and the assassin succeeded to his power and to his danger. But he possessed not equal abilities either to exercise the one, or to repel the other. He beheld with anxious terror the opposite shores of the continent, already filled with arms, with troops, and with vessels; for Constantius had very prudently divided his forces, that he might likewise divide the attention

²⁸ As a great number of medals of Carausius are still preserved, he is become a very favourite object of antiquarian curiosity, and every circumstance of his life and actions has been investigated with sagacious accuracy. Dr. Stukely in particular has devoted a large volume to the British emperor. I have used his materials, and rejected most of his fanciful conjectures.

²⁹ When Mamertinus pronounced his first panegyric the naval preparations of Maximian were completed; and the orator presaged an assured victory. His silence in the second panegyric might alone inform us that the expedition had not succeeded.

³⁰ Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the medals (*Pax Augg.*), inform us of this temporary reconciliation; though I will not presume (as Dr. Stukely has done, *Medallie History of Carausius*, p. 86, &c.) to insert the identical articles of the treaty.

and resistance of the enemy. The attack was at length made by the principal squadron, which, under the command of the præfect Asclepiodotus, an officer of distinguished merit, had been assembled in the mouth of the Seine. So imperfect in those times was the art of navigation, that orators have celebrated the daring courage of the Romans, who ventured to set sail with a side-wind, and on a stormy day. The weather proved favourable to their enterprise. Under the cover of a thick fog they escaped the fleet of Allectus, which had been stationed off the Isle of Wight to receive them, landed in safety on some part of the western coast, and convinced the Britons that a superiority of naval strength will not always protect their country from a foreign invasion. Asclepiodotus had no sooner disembarked the imperial troops than he set fire to his ships; and, as the expedition proved fortunate, his heroic conduct was universally admired. The usurper had posted himself near London, to expect the formidable attack of Constantius, who commanded in person the fleet of Boulogne; but the descent of a new enemy required his immediate presence in the West. He performed this long march in so precipitate a manner, that he encountered the whole force of the præfect with a small body of harassed and disheartened troops. The engagement was soon terminated by the total defeat and death of Allectus; a single battle, as it has often happened, decided the fate of this great island; and when Constantius landed on the shores of Kent, he found them covered with obedient subjects. Their acclamations were loud and unanimous; and the virtues of the conqueror may induce us to believe that they sincerely rejoiced in a revolution which, after a separation of ten years, restored Britain to the body of the Roman empire.³¹

A.D. 296.
Recovery
of Britain
by Con-
stantius.

Britain had none but domestic enemies to dread; and as long as the governors preserved their fidelity, and the troops their discipline, the incursions of the naked savages of Scotland or Ireland could never materially affect the safety of the province. The peace of the continent, and the defence of the principal rivers which bounded the empire, were objects of far greater difficulty and importance. The policy of Diocletian, which inspired the councils of his associates, provided for the public tranquillity, by encouraging a spirit of dissension among the barbarians, and by strengthening the fortifications of the Roman limit. In the East he fixed a line of camps from Egypt to the Persian dominions, and, for every camp, he instituted an adequate number of stationary troops, commanded by their respective officers, and supplied with every kind

Defence of
the frontiers.

Fortifica-
tions.

³¹ With regard to the recovery of Britain, we obtain a few hints from Aurelius Victor and Eutropius.

of arms, from the new arsenals which he had formed at Antioch, Emesa, and Damascus.³² Nor was the precaution of the emperor less watchful against the well-known valour of the barbarians of Europe. From the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube, the ancient camps, towns, and citadels, were diligently re-established, and, in the most exposed places, new ones were skilfully constructed; the strictest vigilance was introduced among the garrisons of the frontier, and every expedient was practised that could render the long chain of fortifications firm and impenetrable.³³ A barrier so respectable was

Dissensions of the barbarians. seldom violated, and the barbarians often turned against each other their disappointed rage. The Goths, the Vandals, the Gepidæ, the Burgundians, the Alemanni, wasted each other's strength by destructive hostilities: and whosoever vanquished, they vanquished the enemies of Rome. The subjects of Diocletian enjoyed the bloody spectacle, and congratulated each other that the mischiefs of civil war were now experienced only by the barbarians.³⁴

Conduct of the emperors. Notwithstanding the policy of Diocletian, it was impossible to maintain an equal and undisturbed tranquillity during a reign of twenty years, and along a frontier of many hundred miles. Sometimes the barbarians suspended their domestic animosities, and the relaxed vigilance of the garrisons sometimes gave a passage to their strength or dexterity. Whenever the provinces were invaded, Diocletian conducted himself with that calm dignity which he always affected or possessed; reserved his presence for such occasions as were worthy of his interposition, never exposed his person or reputation to any unnecessary danger, ensured his success by every means that prudence could suggest, and displayed, with ostentation, the consequences of his victory. In wars of a more difficult nature, and more doubtful event, he employed the rough valour of Maximian; and that faithful soldier was content to ascribe his own victories to the wise counsels and auspicious influence of his benefactor. But after the adoption of the two Cæsars, the emperors, themselves retiring
Valour of the Cæsars. to a less laborious scene of action, devolved on their adopted sons the defence of the Danube and of the Rhine. The vigilant Galerius was never reduced to the necessity of vanquishing an army of barbarians on the Roman territory.³⁵ The brave and active

³² John Malala, in Chron. Antiochen. tom. i. p. 408, 409 [ed. Oxon.; p. 132, ed. Ven.; p. 308, ed. Bonn].

³³ Zosim. l. i. p. 3 [l. ii. c. 34]. That partial historian seems to celebrate the vigilance of Diocletian, with a design of exposing the negligence of Constantine; we may, however, listen to an orator: "Nam quid ego alarum et cohortium castra perenseam, toto Rheni et Istri et Euphratis limite restituta." Panegy. Vet. iv. 18.

³⁴ Ruunt omnes in sanguinem suum populi, quibus non contigit esse Romanis, obstinatæque feritatis pœnas nunc sponte persolvunt. Panegy. Vet. iii. 16. Mamer-tinus illustrates the fact by the example of almost all the nations of the world.

³⁵ He complained, though not with the strictest truth, "Jam fluxisse annos quia-

Constantius delivered Gaul from a very furious inroad of the Alemanni; and his victories of Langres and Vindonissa appear to have been actions of considerable danger and merit. As he traversed the open country with a feeble guard, he was encompassed on a sudden by the superior multitude of the enemy. He retreated with difficulty towards Langres; but, in the general consternation, the citizens refused to open their gates, and the wounded prince was drawn up the wall by the means of a rope. But, on the news of his distress, the Roman troops hastened from all sides to his relief, and before the evening he had satisfied his honour and revenge by the slaughter of six thousand Alemanni.³⁶ From the monuments of those times the obscure traces of several other victories over the barbarians of Sarmatia and Germany might possibly be collected; but the tedious search would not be rewarded either with amusement or with instruction.

The conduct which the emperor Probus had adopted in the disposal of the vanquished was imitated by Diocletian and his associates. The captive barbarians, exchanging death for Treatment of the barbarians. slavery, were distributed among the provincials, and assigned to those districts (in Gaul, the territories of Amiens, Beauvais, Cambay, Treves, Langres, and Troyes, are particularly specified)³⁷ which had been depopulated by the calamities of war. They were usefully employed as shepherds and husbandmen, but were denied the exercise of arms, except when it was found expedient to enrol them in the military service. Nor did the emperors refuse the property of lands, with a less servile tenure, to such of the barbarians as solicited the protection of Rome. They granted a settlement to several colonies of the Carpi, the Bastarnæ, and the Sarmatians; and, by a dangerous indulgence, permitted them in some measure to retain their national manners and independence.³⁸ Among the provincials it was a subject of flattering exultation, that the barbarian, so lately an object of terror, now cultivated their lands, drove their cattle to the neighbouring fair, and contributed by his labour to the public plenty. They congratulated their masters on the powerful accession of subjects and

decim in quibus, in Illyrico, ad ripam Danubii relegatus cum gentibus barbaris luctaret." Lactant. de M. P. c. 18.

³⁶ In the Greek text of Eusebius we read six thousand, a number which I have preferred to the sixty thousand of Jerome, Orosius, Eutropius, and his Greek translator Pæanius.

³⁷ Panegy. Vet. vii. 21.

³⁸ There was a settlement of the Sarmatians in the neighbourhood of Treves, which seems to have been deserted by those lazy barbarians; Ausonius speaks of them in his Mosella [v. 5, seqq.] :—

Unde iter ingrediens nemorosa per avia solum,
Et nulla humani spectans vestigia cultus;

* * * * *

Arvaque Sauromatùm nuper metata colonis.

There was a town of the Carpi in the Lower Mæsia.

soldiers; but they forgot to observe that multitudes of secret enemies, insolent from favour, or desperate from oppression, were introduced into the heart of the empire.³⁹

While the Cæsars exercised their valour on the banks of the Rhine and Danube, the presence of the emperors was required on the southern confines of the Roman world. From the Nile to Mount Atlas, Africa was in arms. A confederacy of five Moorish nations issued from their deserts to invade the peaceful provinces.⁴⁰ Julian had assumed the purple at Carthage.⁴¹ Achilleus at Alexandria, and even the Blemmyes, renewed, or rather continued, their incursions into the Upper Egypt. Scarcely any circumstances have been preserved of the exploits of Maximian in the western parts of Africa; but it appears, by the event, that the progress of his arms was rapid and decisive, that he vanquished the fiercest barbarians of Mauritania, and that he removed them from the mountains, whose inaccessible strength had inspired their inhabitants with a lawless

confidence, and habituated them to a life of rapine and violence.⁴² Diocletian, on his side, opened the campaign in Egypt by the siege of Alexandria, cut off the aqueducts which conveyed the waters of the Nile into every quarter of that immense city,⁴³ and, rendering his camp impregnable to the sallies of the besieged multitude, he pushed his reiterated attacks with caution and vigour. After a siege of eight months, Alexandria, wasted by the sword and by fire, implored the clemency of the conqueror, but it experienced the full extent of his severity. Many thousands of the citizens perished in a promiscuous slaughter, and there were few obnoxious persons in Egypt who escaped a sentence either of death or at least of exile.⁴⁴ The fate of Busiris and of Coptos was still more melancholy than that of Alexandria; those proud cities, the former distinguished by its antiquity, the latter enriched by the passage of the Indian trade, were utterly destroyed by the arms and by the severe order of Diocletian.⁴⁵ The character of the Egyptian

³⁹ See the rhetorical exultation of Eumenius. Panegy. vii. 9.

⁴⁰ Scaliger (*Animadvers. ad Euseb. p. 243*) decides, in his usual manner, that the Quinquegentiani, or five African nations, were the five great cities, the Pentapolis of the inoffensive province of Cyrene.

⁴¹ After his defeat Julian stabbed himself with a dagger, and immediately leaped into the flames. Victor in *Epitome* [c. 39].

⁴² Tu ferocissimos Mauritanias populos inaccessis montium jugis et naturali munitione fidentes, expugnasti, recepisti, transtulisti. Panegy. Vet. vi. 8.

⁴³ See the description of Alexandria in Hirtius de Bell. Alexandrin. c. 5.

⁴⁴ Eutrop. ix. 24 [15]. Orosius, vii. 25. John Malala in Chron. Antioch. p. 409, 410 [ed. Oxon.; p. 132, ed. Ven.; p. 309, ed. Bonn]. Yet Eumenius assures us that Egypt was pacified by the clemency of Diocletian.

⁴⁵ Eusebius (in Chron. [An. CCXCIII.]) places their destruction several years sooner, and at a time when Egypt itself was in a state of rebellion against the Romans.

More probably A.D. 297. See Clinton, *Fasti Rom.* vol. i. p. 338.—S.

nation, insensible to kindness, but extremely susceptible of fear, could alone justify this excessive rigour. The seditions of Alexandria had often affected the tranquillity and subsistence of Rome itself. Since the usurpation of Firmus, the province of Upper Egypt, incessantly relapsing into rebellion, had embraced the alliance of the savages of Æthiopia. The number of the Blemmyes, scattered between the island of Meroe and the Red Sea, was very inconsiderable, their disposition was unwarlike, their weapons rude and inoffensive.⁴⁶ Yet in the public disorders these barbarians, whom antiquity, shocked with the deformity of their figure, had almost excluded from the human species, presumed to rank themselves among the enemies of Rome.⁴⁷ Such had been the unworthy allies of the Egyptians; and while the attention of the state was engaged in more serious wars, their vexatious inroads might again harass the repose of the province. With a view of opposing to the Blemmyes a suitable adversary, Diocletian persuaded the Nobatæ, or people of Nubia, to remove from their ancient habitations in the deserts of Libya, and resigned to them an extensive but unprofitable territory above Syene and the cataracts of the Nile, with the stipulation that they should ever respect and guard the frontier of the empire. The treaty long subsisted; and till the establishment of Christianity introduced stricter notions of religious worship, it was annually ratified by a solemn sacrifice in the isle of Elephantine, in which the Romans, as well as the barbarians, adored the same visible or invisible powers of the universe.⁴⁸

At the same time that Diocletian chastised the past crimes of the Egyptians, he provided for their future safety and happiness by many wise regulations, which were confirmed and enforced under the succeeding reigns.⁴⁹ One very remarkable edict which he published, instead of being condemned as the effect of jealous tyranny, deserves to be applauded as an act of prudence and humanity. He caused a diligent inquiry to be made “for all the ancient books which
“treated of the admirable art of making gold and silver,
“and without pity committed them to the flames; appre-

He suppresses books of alchymy.

⁴⁶ Strabo, l. xvii. p. 819. Pomponius Mela, l. i. c. 4. His words are curious: “Intra, si credere libet, vix homines magisque semiferi; Ægipanes, et *Blemmyes*, et “*Satyri*.”

⁴⁷ Ausus sese inserere fortunæ et provocare arma Romana.

⁴⁸ See Procopius de Bell. Persic. l. i. c. 19.^a

⁴⁹ He fixed the public allowance of corn for the people of Alexandria at two millions of *medinni*; about four hundred thousand quarters. Chron. Paschal. p. 276 Procop. Hist. Arcan. c. 26.

^a Compare, on the epoch of the final extirpation of the rites of Paganism from the Isle of Philæ (Elephantine), which subsisted till the edict of Theodosius in the sixth century, a dissertation of M. Letronne on certain Greek inscriptions. The disser-

tation contains some very interesting observations on the conduct and policy of Diocletian in Egypt. Matér. pour l'Hist. du Christianisme en Egypte, Nubie, et Abyssinie, Paris, 1832.—M.

"hensive, as we are assured, lest the opulence of the Egyptians should inspire them with confidence to rebel against the empire."⁵⁰ But if Diocletian had been convinced of the reality of that valuable art, far from extinguishing the memory, he would have converted the operation of it to the benefit of the public revenue. It is much more likely that his good sense discovered to him the folly of such magnificent pretensions, and that he was desirous of preserving the reason and fortunes of his subjects from the mischievous pursuit.

Novelty and
progress of
that art.

It may be remarked that these ancient books, so liberally ascribed to Pythagoras, to Solomon, or to Hermes, were the pious frauds of more recent adepts. The Greeks were inattentive either to the use or to the abuse of chymistry. In that immense register, where Pliny has deposited the discoveries, the arts, and the errors of mankind, there is not the least mention of the transmutation of metals; and the persecution of Diocletian is the first authentic event in the history of alchemy. The conquest of Egypt by the Arabs diffused that vain science over the globe. Congenial to the avarice of the human heart, it was studied in China as in Europe, with equal eagerness and with equal success. The darkness of the middle ages ensured a favourable reception to every tale of wonder, and the revival of learning gave new vigour to hope, and suggested more specious arts of deception. Philosophy, with the aid of experience, has at length banished the study of alchemy; and the present age, however desirous of riches, is content to seek them by the humbler means of commerce and industry.⁵¹

The reduction of Egypt was immediately followed by the Persian war. It was reserved for the reign of Diocletian to van-
quish that powerful nation, and to extort a confession from the successors of Artaxerxes of the superior majesty of the Roman empire.

We have observed, under the reign of Valerian, that Armenia was subdued by the perfidy and the arms of the Persians, and that, after the assassination of Chosroes, his son Tiridates, the infant heir of the monarchy, was saved by the fidelity of his friends, and educated under the protection of the emperors. Tiridates derived from his exile such advantages as he could never have obtained on the throne of Armenia; the early knowledge of adversity, of mankind, and of the Roman discipline. He signalised his youth by deeds of valour, and displayed a matchless dexterity, as well as strength, in every martial exercise, and even in the less

⁵⁰ John Antioch. in Excerpt. Valesian. p. 834. Suidas in Diocletian.

⁵¹ See a short history and confutation of Alchymy, in the works of that philosophica. compiler, La Mothe le Vayer, tom. i. p. 327-353.

honourable contests of the Olympian games.⁵² Those qualities were more nobly exerted in the defence of his benefactor Licinius.⁵³ That officer, in the sedition which occasioned the death of Probus, was exposed to the most imminent danger, and the ^{A.D. 282.} enraged soldiers were forcing their way into his tent, when they were checked by the single arm of the Armenian prince. The gratitude of Tiridates contributed soon afterwards to his restoration. Licinius was in every station the friend and companion of Galerius, and the merit of Galerius, long before he was raised to the dignity of Cæsar, had been known and esteemed by Diocletian. In the third year of that emperor's reign Tiridates was invested with the kingdom of Armenia. The justice of the measure was not less evident than its expediency. It was time to rescue from the usurpation of the Persian monarch an important territory, which, since the reign of Nero, had been always granted under the protection of the empire to a younger branch of the house of Arsaces.⁵⁴

When Tiridates appeared on the frontiers of Armenia, he was received with an unfeigned transport of joy and loyalty. ^{A.D. 286. His restoration to the throne of Armenia.} During twenty-six years the country had experienced the real and imaginary hardships of a foreign yoke. The Persian monarchs adorned their new conquest with magnificent buildings; but those monuments had been erected at the expense of the people, and were abhorred as badges of slavery. The ^{State of the country.} apprehension of a revolt had inspired the most rigorous precautions: oppression had been aggravated by insult, and the consciousness of the public hatred had been productive of every measure that could render it still more implacable. We have already remarked the intolerant spirit of the Magian religion. The statues of the deified kings of Armenia, and the sacred images of the sun and moon, were broke in pieces by the zeal of the conqueror; and the perpetual fire of Ormuzd was kindled and preserved upon an altar erected on the summit of Mount Bagavan.⁵⁵ It was ^{Revolt of the people and nobles.} natural that a people exasperated by so many injuries

⁵² See the education and strength of Tiridates in the Armenian history of Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 76. He could seize two wild bulls by the horns and break them off with his hands.

⁵³ If we give credit to the younger Victor [Epit. 41], who supposes that in the year 323 Licinius was only sixty years of age, he could scarcely be the same person as the patron of Tiridates; but we know from much better authority (Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. x. c. 8) that Licinius was at that time in the last period of old age: sixteen years before, he is represented with grey hairs and as the contemporary of Galerius. See Lactant. c. 32. Licinius was probably born about the year 250.

⁵⁴ See the sixty-second and sixty-third books of Dion Cassius [l. lxxiii. c. 5].

⁵⁵ Moses of Chorene, Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 74. The statues had been erected by Valarsaces, who reigned in Armenia about 130 years before Christ, and was the first king of the family of Arsaces (see Moses, Hist. Armen. l. ii. 2, 3). The deification of the Arsacides is mentioned by Justin (xli. 5) and by Ammianus Marcellinus (xxiii. 6).

should arm with zeal in the cause of their independence, their religion, and their hereditary sovereign. The torrent bore down every obstacle, and the Persian garrisons retreated before its fury. The nobles of Armenia flew to the standard of Tiridates, all alleging their past merit, offering their future service, and soliciting from the new king those honours and rewards from which they had been excluded with disdain under the foreign government.⁵⁶ The command of the army was bestowed on Artavasdes, whose father had saved the infancy of Tiridates, and whose family had been massacred for that generous action. The brother of Artavasdes obtained the government of a province. One of the first military dignities was conferred on the satrap Otas, a man of singular temperance and fortitude, who presented to the king his sister⁵⁷ and a considerable treasure, both of which, in a sequestered fortress, Otas had preserved from violation. Among the Armenian nobles appeared an ally whose fortunes are too remarkable to pass unnoticed. His name was Mamgo,^a his origin was Scythian, and the horde which acknowledged his authority had encamped a very few years before on the skirts of the Chinese empire,⁵⁸ which at that time extended as far as the neighbourhood of Sogdiana.⁵⁹ Having incurred the dis-

⁵⁶ The Armenian nobility was numerous and powerful. Moses mentions many families which were distinguished under the reign of Valarsaces (l. ii. 7), and which still subsisted in his own time, about the middle of the fifth century. See the preface of his editors.

⁵⁷ She was named Chosroiduchta, and had not the *os patulum* like other women. (Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 79.) I do not understand the expression.

⁵⁸ In the Armenian History (l. ii. 78), as well as in the Geography (p. 367), China is called Zenia, or Zenastan. It is characterised by the production of silk, by the opulence of the natives, and by their love of peace, above all the other nations of the earth.^b

⁵⁹ You-ti, the first emperor of the seventh dynasty, who then reigned in China, had political transactions with Fergana, a province of Sogdiana, and is said to have received a Roman embassy (Histoire des Huns, tom. i. p. 38). In those ages the Chinese kept a garrison at Kashgar, and one of their generals, about the time of Trajan, marched as far as the Caspian Sea. With regard to the intercourse between China and the western countries, a curious memoir of M. de Guignes may be consulted, in the Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xxii. p. 355.^c

^a Mamgo (according to M. St. Martin, note to Le Beau, ii. 213) belonged to the imperial race of Hon, who had filled the throne of China for four hundred years. Dethroned by the usurping race of Wei, Mamgo found a hospitable reception in Persia in the reign of Ardeschir. The emperor of China having demanded the surrender of the fugitive and his partisans, Sapor, then king, threatened with war both by Rome and China, counselled Mamgo to retire into Armenia. "I have expelled him from my dominions (he answered the Chinese ambassador); I have banished him to the extremity of the earth where the sun sets; I have dismissed him to certain

death." Compare Mém. sur l'Arménie, ii. 25.—M.

^b See St. Martin, Mém. sur l'Arménie, i. 304.—M.

^c The Chinese Annals mention, under the ninth year of Yan-hi, which corresponds with the year 166 J. C., an embassy which arrived from Ta-thsin, and was sent by a prince called An-thun, who can be no other than Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who then ruled over the Romans. St. Martin, Mém. sur l'Arménie, ii. 80. See also Klaproth, Tableaux Historiques de l'Asie, p. 69. The embassy came by Jy-nan, Tonguin.—M.

pleasure of his master, Mamgo, with his followers, retired to the banks of the Oxus, and implored the protection of Sapor. The emperor of China claimed the fugitive, and alleged the rights of sovereignty. The Persian monarch pleaded the laws of hospitality, and with some difficulty avoided a war by the promise that he would banish Mamgo to the uttermost parts of the West, a punishment, as he described it, not less dreadful than death itself. Armenia was chosen for the place of exile, and a large district was assigned to the Scythian horde, on which they might feed their flocks and herds, and remove their encampment from one place to another, according to the different seasons of the year. They were employed to repel the invasion of Tiridates; but their leader, after weighing the obligations and injuries which he had received from the Persian monarch, resolved to abandon his party. The Armenian prince, who was well acquainted with the merit as well as power of Mamgo, treated him with distinguished respect; and, by admitting him into his confidence, acquired a brave and faithful servant, who contributed very effectually to his restoration.⁶⁰

For a while fortune appeared to favour the enterprising valour of Tiridates. He not only expelled the enemies of his family and country from the whole extent of Armenia, but in the prosecution of his revenge he carried his arms, or at least his incursions, into the heart of Assyria. The historian who has preserved the name of Tiridates from oblivion, celebrates, with a degree of national enthusiasm, his personal prowess; and, in the true spirit of eastern romance, describes the giants and the elephants that fell beneath his invincible arm. It is from other information that we discover the distracted state of the Persian monarchy, to which the king of Armenia was indebted for some part of his advantages. The throne was disputed by the ambition of contending brothers; and Hormuz, after exerting without success the strength of his own party, had recourse to the dangerous assistance of the barbarians who inhabited the banks of the Caspian Sea.⁶¹ The civil war was, however, soon terminated, either by a victory or by a reconciliation; and Narses, who was universally acknowledged as king of Persia, directed his whole force against the foreign enemy. The contest then became too unequal: nor was the valour of the hero able to withstand the power of the monarch. Tiridates, a second time

The Persians
recover
Armenia.

⁶⁰ See Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 81.

⁶¹ Ipsos Persas ipsumque Regem ascitis Sacis, et Rufis, et Gelis, petit frater Ormies. Panegyric. Vet. iii. [ii.] 17. The Sacæ were a nation of wandering Scythians, who encamped towards the sources of the Oxus and the Jaxartes. The Geli were the inhabitants of Ghilan, along the Caspian Sea, and who so long, under the name of Dilemites, infested the Persian monarchy. See d'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale.

expelled from the throne of Armenia, once more took refuge in the court of the emperors.^a Narses soon re-established his authority over the revolted province; and, loudly complaining of the protection afforded by the Romans to rebels and fugitives, aspired to the conquest of the East.⁶²

Neither prudence nor honour could permit the emperors to forsake the cause of the Armenian king, and it was resolved to exert the force of the empire in the Persian war. Diocletian, with the calm dignity which he constantly assumed, fixed his own station in the city of Antioch, from whence he prepared and directed the military operations.⁶³ The conduct of the legions was intrusted to the intrepid valour of Galerius, who, for that

important purpose, was removed from the banks of the Danube to those of the Euphrates. The armies soon encountered each other in the plains of Mesopotamia, and two battles were fought with various and doubtful success: but the third engagement was of a more decisive nature; and the Roman army received a total overthrow, which is attributed to the rashness of Galerius, who, with an inconsiderable body of troops, attacked the innumerable host of the Persians.⁶⁴ But the consideration of the country that was the scene of action may suggest another reason for his defeat. The same ground on which Galerius was vanquished had been rendered memorable by the death of Crassus and the slaughter of ten legions. It was a plain of more than sixty miles, which extended from the hills of Carrhæ to the Euphrates; a smooth and barren surface of sandy desert, without a hillock, without a tree, and without a spring of fresh water.⁶⁵ The steady infantry of the Romans, fainting with heat and thirst, could neither hope for victory if they preserved their ranks, nor break their ranks without exposing themselves to the most imminent danger. In this situation they were gradually encompassed by the superior numbers, harassed by the rapid evolutions, and destroyed by the arrows of the barbarian

⁶² Moses of Chorene takes no notice of this second revolution, which I have been obliged to collect from a passage of Ammianus Marcellinus (l. xxiii. c. 5). Lactantius speaks of the ambition of Narses: "Concitus domesticis exemplis avi sui Saporis ad occupandum orientem magnis copiis inhiabat." De Mort. Persecut. c. 9.

⁶³ We may readily believe that Lactantius ascribes to cowardice the conduct of Diocletian. Julian, in his oration, says that he remained with all the forces of the empire; a very hyperbolical expression.

⁶⁴ Our five abbreviators, Eutropius, Festus, the two Victors, and Orosius, all relate the last and great battle; but Orosius is the only one who speaks of the two former.

⁶⁵ The nature of the country is finely described by Plutarch, in the Life of Crassus; and by Xenophon, in the first book of the Anabasis.

^a M. St. Martin represents this differently: "Le roi de Perse * * * profite d'un voyage que Tiridate avoit fait à Rome pour attaquer ce royaume." This reads

like the evasion of the national historians to disguise the fact discreditable to their hero. See Mémoires sur l'Arménie, i. 304. —M.

cavalry. The king of Armenia had signalised his valour in the battle, and acquired personal glory by the public misfortune. He was pursued as far as the Euphrates; his horse was wounded, and it appeared impossible for him to escape the victorious enemy. In this extremity Tiridates embraced the only refuge which he saw before him: he dismounted and plunged into the stream. His armour was heavy, the river very deep, and at those parts at least half a mile in breadth;⁶⁶ yet such was his strength and dexterity, that he reached in safety the opposite bank.⁶⁷ With regard to the Roman general, we are ignorant of the circumstances of his escape; but when he returned to Antioch, Diocletian received him, His reception by Diocletian. not with the tenderness of a friend and colleague, but with the indignation of an offended sovereign. The haughtiest of men, clothed in his purple, but humbled by the sense of his fault and misfortune, was obliged to follow the emperor's chariot above a mile on foot, and to exhibit, before the whole court, the spectacle of his disgrace.⁶⁸

As soon as Diocletian had indulged his private resentment, and asserted the majesty of supreme power, he yielded to the Second campaign of Galerius, A.D. 297. [A.D. 298.] submissive entreaties of the Cæsar, and permitted him to retrieve his own honour, as well as that of the Roman arms. In the room of the unwarlike troops of Asia, which had most probably served in the first expedition, a second army was drawn from the veterans and new levies of the Illyrian frontier, and a considerable body of Gothic auxiliaries were taken into the Imperial pay.⁶⁹ At the head of a chosen army of twenty-five thousand men Galerius again passed the Euphrates; but, instead of exposing his legions in the open plains of Mesopotamia, he advanced through the mountains of Armenia, where he found the inhabitants devoted to his cause, and the country as favourable to the operations of infantry as it was inconvenient for the motions of cavalry.⁷⁰ Adversity had confirmed the Roman discipline, while the His victory, barbarians, elated by success, were become so negligent and remiss, that in the moment when they least expected it they were surprised by the active conduct of Galerius, who, attended only by two horsemen, had with his own eyes secretly examined the state and position of their camp. A surprise, especially in the night-time, was for the

⁶⁶ See Foster's Dissertation in the second volume of the translation of the *Anabasis* by Spelman; which I will venture to recommend as one of the best versions extant.

⁶⁷ *Hist. Armen.* l. ii. c. 76. I have transferred this exploit of Tiridates from an imaginary defeat to the real one of Galerius.

⁶⁸ *Ammian. Marcellin.* l. xiv. [c. 11.] The mile, in the hands of Eutropius (ix. 24 [15]), of Festus (c. 25), and of Orosius (vii. 25), easily increased to several miles.

⁶⁹ Aurelius Victor. *Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 21.

⁷⁰ Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39] says, "Per Armeniam in hostes contendit, quæ ferme sola, seu facilius vincendi via est." He followed the conduct of Trajan and the idea of Julius Cæsar.

most part fatal to a Persian army. "Their horses were tied, and generally shackled, to prevent their running away; and if an alarm happened, a Persian had his housing to fix, his horse to bridle, and his corselet to put on, before he could mount."⁷¹ On this occasion the impetuous attack of Galerius spread disorder and dismay over the camp of the barbarians. A slight resistance was followed by a dreadful carnage, and, in the general confusion, the wounded monarch (for Narses commanded his armies in person) fled towards the deserts of Media. His sumptuous tents, and those of his satraps, afforded an immense booty to the conqueror; and an incident is mentioned which proves the rustic but martial ignorance of the legions in the elegant superfluities of life. A bag of shining leather, filled with pearls, fell into the hands of a private soldier; he carefully preserved the bag, but he threw away its contents, judging that whatever was of no use could not possibly be of any value.⁷² The principal loss of Narses was of a much more affecting nature. Several of his wives, his sisters, and children, who had attended the army, were made captives in the defeat. But though the character of Galerius had in general very little affinity with that of Alexander, he imitated, after his victory, the amiable behaviour of the Macedonian towards the family of Darius. The wives and children of Narses were protected from violence and rapine, conveyed to a place of safety, and treated with every mark of respect and tenderness that was due from a generous enemy to their age, their sex, and their royal dignity.⁷³

While the East anxiously expected the decision of this great contest, the emperor Diocletian, having assembled in Syria a strong army of observation, displayed from a distance the resources of the Roman power, and reserved himself for any future emergency of the war. On the intelligence of the victory he condescended to advance towards the frontier, with a view of moderating, by his presence and counsels, the pride of Galerius. The interview of the Roman princes at Nisibis was accompanied with every expression of respect on one side, and of esteem on the other. It was in that city that they soon afterwards gave audience to the ambassador of the Great King.⁷⁴ The power, or at least the spirit, of Narses

⁷¹ Xenophon's *Anabasis*, l. iii. [c. 4, § 35.] For that reason the Persian cavalry encamped sixty stadia from the enemy.

⁷² The story is told by Ammianus, l. xxii. Instead of *saccum* some read *scutum*.

⁷³ The Persians confessed the Roman superiority in morals as well as in arms. Eutrop. ix. 24. But this respect and gratitude of enemies is very seldom to be found in their own accounts.

⁷⁴ The account of the negotiation is taken from the fragments of Peter the Patrician, in the *Excerpta Legationum* published in the Byzantine Collection. Peter lived under Justinian; but it is very evident, by the nature of his materials, that they are drawn from the most authentic and respectable writers.

had been broken by his last defeat; and he considered an immediate peace as the only means that could stop the progress of the Roman arms. He despatched Apharban, a servant who possessed his favour and confidence, with a commission to negotiate a treaty, or rather to receive whatever conditions the conqueror should impose. Apharban opened the conference by expressing his master's gratitude for the generous treatment of his family, and by soliciting the liberty of those illustrious captives. He celebrated the valour of Galerius, without degrading the reputation of Narses, and thought it no dishonour to confess the superiority of the victorious Cæsar over a monarch who had surpassed in glory all the princes of his race. Notwithstanding the justice of the Persian cause, he was empowered to submit the present differences to the decision of the emperors themselves; convinced as he was that, in the midst of prosperity, they would not be unmindful of the vicissitudes of fortune. Apharban concluded his discourse in the style of Eastern allegory, by observing that the Roman and Persian monarchies were the two eyes of the world, which would remain imperfect and mutilated if either of them should be put out.

Speech of
the Persian
ambassador.

"It well becomes the Persians," replied Galerius, with a transport of fury which seemed to convulse his whole frame, "it well becomes the Persians to expatiate on the vicissitudes of fortune, and calmly to read us lectures on the virtues of moderation. Let them remember their own *moderation* towards the unhappy Valerian. They vanquished him by fraud, they treated him with indignity. They detained him till the last moment of his life in shameful captivity, and after his death they exposed his body to perpetual ignominy." Softening, however, his tone, Galerius insinuated to the ambassador that it had never been the practice of the Romans to trample on a prostrate enemy; and that, on this occasion, they should consult their own dignity rather than the Persian merit. He dismissed Apharban with a hope that Narses would soon be informed on what conditions he might obtain, from the clemency of the emperors, a lasting peace and the restoration of his wives and children. In this conference we may discover the fierce passions of Galerius, as well as his deference to the superior wisdom and authority of Diocletian. The ambition of the former grasped at the conquest of the East, and had proposed to reduce Persia into the state of a province. The prudence of the latter, who adhered to the moderate policy of Augustus and the Antonines, embraced the favourable opportunity of terminating a successful war by an honourable and advantageous peace.⁷⁵

Answer of
Galerius.

Moderation
of Diocletian.

⁷⁵ Adeo victor (says Aurelius [de Cæsar. c. 39]) ut ni Valerius, cujus nutu omnia gerebantur, abnuisset, Romani fasces in provinciam novam ferrentur. Verum pars terrarum tamen nobis utilior quæsitæ.

In pursuance of their promise, the emperors soon afterwards appointed Sicatorius Probus, one of their secretaries, to acquaint the Persian court with their final resolution. As the minister of peace, he was received with every mark of politeness and friendship; but, under the pretence of allowing him the necessary repose after so long a journey, the audience of Probus was deferred from day to day, and he attended the slow motions of the king, till at length he was admitted to his presence, near the river Asprudus, in Media. The secret motive of Narses in this delay had been to collect such a military force as might enable him, though sincerely desirous of peace, to negotiate with the greater weight and dignity. Three persons only assisted at this important conference, the minister Apharban, the præfect of the guards, and an officer who had commanded on the Armenian frontier.⁷⁶ The first condition proposed by the ambassador is not at present of a very intelligible nature; that the city of Nisibis might be established for the place of mutual exchange, or, as we should formerly have termed it, for the staple of trade, between the two empires. There is no difficulty in conceiving the intention of the Roman princes to improve their revenue by some restraints upon commerce; but as Nisibis was situated within their own dominions, and as they were masters both of the imports and exports, it should seem that such restraints were the objects of an internal law, rather than of a foreign treaty. To render them more effectual, some stipulations were probably required on the side of the king of Persia, which appeared so very repugnant either to his interest or to his dignity that Narses could not be persuaded to subscribe them. As this was the only article to which he refused his consent, it was no longer insisted on; and the emperors either suffered the trade to flow in its natural channels, or contented themselves with such restrictions as it depended on their own authority to establish.

As soon as this difficulty was removed a solemn peace was concluded and ratified between the two nations. The conditions of a treaty so glorious to the empire, and so necessary to Persia, may deserve a more peculiar attention, as the history of Rome presents very few transactions of a similar nature; most of her wars having either been terminated by absolute conquest, or waged against barbarians ignorant of the use of letters.

and articles of the treaty. I. The Aboras, or, as it is called by Xenophon, the Araxes, was fixed as the boundary between the two mo-

The Aboras fixed as the limits between the empires.

⁷⁶ He had been governor of Sumium^a (Pet. Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 30 [ed. Paris; p. 21, ed. Ven.; p. 135, ed. Bonn]. This province seems to be mentioned by Moses of Chorene (Geograph. p. 360), and lay to the east of Mount Ararat.

^a The Siounikh of the Armenian writers. St. Martin, Mém. sur l'Arménie, i. 142

narchies.⁷⁷ That river, which rose near the Tigris, was increased, a few miles below Nisibis, by the little stream of the Mygdonius, passed under the walls of Singara, and fell into the Euphrates at Circesium, a frontier town, which, by the care of Diocletian, was very strongly fortified.⁷⁸ Mesopotamia, the object of so many wars, was ceded to the empire; and the Persians, by this treaty, renounced all pretensions to that great province. II. They relinquished to the Romans five provinces beyond the Tigris.⁷⁹ Their situa-
Cession of
five pro-
vinces
beyond the
Tigris.
tion formed a very useful barrier, and their natural strength was soon improved by art and military skill. Four of these, to the north of the river, were districts of obscure fame and inconsiderable extent—Intiline, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Moxoene;^b but on the east of the Tigris the empire acquired the large and mountainous territory of Carduene, the ancient seat of the Carduchians, who preserved for many ages their manly freedom in the heart of the despotic monarchies of Asia. The ten thousand Greeks traversed

⁷⁷ By an error of the geographer Ptolemy, the position of Singara is removed from the Aboras to the Tigris, which may have produced the mistake of Peter in assigning the latter river for the boundary instead of the former. The line of the Roman frontier traversed, but never followed, the course of the Tigris.^a

⁷⁸ Procopius de *Ædificiis*, l. ii. c. 6.

⁷⁹ Three of the provinces, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Carduene, are allowed on all sides. But instead of the other two, Peter (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30) inserts Rehimene and Sophene. I have preferred Ammianus (l. xxv. 7), because it might be proved that Sophene was never in the hands of the Persians, either before the reign of Diocletian or after that of Jovian. For want of correct maps, like those of M. d'Anville, almost all the moderns, with Tillemont and Valesius at their head, have imagined that it was in respect to Persia, and not to Rome, that the five provinces were situated beyond the Tigris.

^a There are here several errors. The course of the Aboras, or Aborrhias, the Araxes of Xenophon (*Anab.* i. 4, § 19), more usually called Chaboras, the Habor or Chebar of the Samaritan captivity, and the modern Khabur, has been traced for the first time by Mr. Layard. It does not rise near the Tigris, but far to the west, in the direction of Harran, at a place called Ras-al-Ain (the head of the spring). From thence it flows in a general southeasterly direction to the hill Koukab, where it receives the Mygdonius, now called Jerujer, upon which Nisibis was situated, and which rises near the Tigris. After its union with the Mygdonius, the Chaboras flows in a southerly direction and falls into the Euphrates at Circesium, the Carchemish of the Old Testament, now called Karkesee, or Abou Psera. Singara, the modern Sinjar, is not upon the Chaboras, nor indeed upon any river. It lies between Mosul and the Chaboras, at the foot of the Sinjar hill, a solitary ridge rising abruptly in the midst of the

desert. See Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 234, *seq.*—S.

^b See St. Martin, note on Le Beau, vol. i. p. 380. He would read, for Intiline, Ingeleme, the name of a small province of Armenia near the sources of the Tigris, mentioned by St. Epiphanius (*Hæres.* 60): for the unknown name Arzacene, with Gibbon, Arzanene. These provinces do not appear to have made an integral part of the Roman empire; Roman garrisons replaced those of Persia, but the sovereignty remained in the hands of the feudatory princes of Armenia. A prince of Carduene, ally or dependent on the empire, with the Roman name of Jovianus, occurs in the reign of Julian.—M.

Moxoene, called Mogkh by the Armenians, and now Mukus, a district south of the lake Wan, from which it was separated by high mountains. See Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 415–417.—S.

their country after a painful march, or rather engagement, of seven days; and it is confessed by their leader, in his incomparable relation of the retreat, that they suffered more from the arrows of the Carduchians than from the power of the Great King.⁸⁰ Their posterity, the Curds, with very little alteration either of name or

Armenia.

manners,^a acknowledged the nominal sovereignty of the

Turkish sultan. III. It is almost needless to observe that Tiridates, the faithful ally of Rome, was restored to the throne of his fathers, and that the rights of the Imperial supremacy were fully asserted and secured. The limits of Armenia were extended as far as the fortress of Sintha in Media, and this increase of dominion was not so much an act of liberality as of justice. Of the provinces already mentioned beyond the Tigris, the four first had been dismembered by the Parthians from the crown of Armenia;⁸¹ and when the Romans acquired the possession of them, they stipulated, at the expense of the usurpers, an ample compensation, which invested their ally with the extensive and fertile country of Atropatene. Its principal city, in the same situation perhaps as the modern Tauris, was frequently honoured with the residence of Tiridates; and as it sometimes bore the name of Ecbatana, he imitated, in the buildings

Iberia.

and fortifications, the splendid capital of the Medes.⁸² IV.

The country of Iberia was barren, its inhabitants rude and savage. But they were accustomed to the use of arms, and they separated from the empire barbarians much fiercer and more formidable than themselves. The narrow defiles of Mount Caucasus were in their hands, and it was in their choice either to admit or to exclude the wandering tribes of Sarmatia, whenever a rapacious spirit urged them to penetrate into the richer climates of the South.⁸³ The nomination of the kings of Iberia, which was resigned by the Persian monarch to the emperors, contributed to the strength and security of the Roman power in Asia.⁸⁴ The East enjoyed a profound tran-

⁸⁰ Xenophon's *Anabasis*, l. iv. [c. 3 init.] Their bows were three cubits in length, their arrows two; they rolled down stones that were each a waggon-load. The Greeks found a great many villages in that rude country.

⁸¹ According to Eutropius (vi. 9, as the text is represented by the best MSS.), the city of Tigranocerta was in Arzanene. The names and situation of the other three may be faintly traced.

⁸² Compare Herodotus, l. i. c. 98, with Moses Chorenens. *Hist. Armen.* l. ii. c. 84, and the map of Armenia given by his editors.

⁸³ *Hiberi, locorum potentes, Caspiâ viâ Sarmatam in Armenios raptim effundunt.* Tacit. *Annal.* vi. 33. See Strabon. *Geograph.* l. xi. p. 500.

⁸⁴ Peter Patricius (in *Excerpt. Leg.* p. 30 [ed. Paris; p. 21, ed. Ven.; p. 135, ed. Bonn]) is the only writer who mentions the Iberian article of the treaty.

^a I travelled through this country in 1810, and should judge, from what I have read and seen of its inhabitants, that they have remained unchanged in their appear-

ance and character for more than twenty centuries. Malcolm, note to *Hist. of Persia*, vol. i. p. 82.—M.

quillity during forty years; and the treaty between the rival monarchies was strictly observed till the death of Tiridates; when a new generation, animated with different views and different passions, succeeded to the government of the world; and the grandson of Narses undertook a long and memorable war against the princes of the house of Constantine.

The arduous work of rescuing the distressed empire from tyrants and barbarians had now been completely achieved by a succession of Illyrian peasants. As soon as Diocletian entered into the twentieth year of his reign, he celebrated that memorable æra, as well as the success of his arms, by the pomp of a Roman triumph.⁸⁵ Maximian, the equal partner of his power, was his only companion in the glory of that day. The two Cæsars had fought and conquered, but the merit of their exploits was ascribed, according to the rigour of ancient maxims, to the auspicious influence of their fathers and emperors.⁸⁶ The triumph of Diocletian and Maximian was less magnificent, perhaps, than those of Aurelian and Probus, but it was dignified by several circumstances of superior fame and good fortune. Africa and Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Nile, furnished their respective trophies; but the most distinguished ornament was of a more singular nature, a Persian victory followed by an important conquest. The representations of rivers, mountains, and provinces were carried before the Imperial car. The images of the captive wives, the sisters, and the children of the Great King afforded a new and grateful spectacle to the vanity of the people.⁸⁷ In the eyes of posterity this triumph is remarkable by a distinction of a less honourable kind. It was the last that Rome ever beheld. Soon after this period the emperors ceased to vanquish, and Rome ceased to be the capital of the empire.

The spot on which Rome was founded had been consecrated by ancient ceremonies and imaginary miracles. The presence of some god, or the memory of some hero, seemed to animate every part of the city, and the empire of the world had been promised to the Capitol.⁸⁸ The native Romans felt and

Triumph
of Diocle-
tian and
Maximian
A.D. 303.
Nov. 20.

Long ab-
sence of the
emperors
from Rome.

⁸⁵ Euseb. in Chron. Pagi ad annum. Till the discovery of the treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, it was not certain that the triumph and the Vicennalia were celebrated at the same time.^a

⁸⁶ At the time of the Vicennalia, Galerius seems to have kept his station on the Danube. See Lactant. de M. P. c. 38.

⁸⁷ Eutropius (ix. 27 [16]) mentions them as a part of the triumph. As the *persons* had been restored to Narses, nothing more than their *images* could be exhibited.

⁸⁸ Livy gives us a speech of Camillus on that subject (v. 51-54), full of eloquence

^a Clinton, however, on the authority of Hieronymus and Prosper, places the triumph in A.D. 302, the year before the Vicennalia. Though the Vicennalia were celebrated Nov. 20, this day was not the

anniversary of the accession of Diocletian, for he began to reign Sept. 17, A.D. 284. See Clinton, *Fasti Rom.* vol. i. p. 345, 346; vol. ii. p. 73.—S.

confessed the power of this agreeable illusion. It was derived from their ancestors, had grown up with their earliest habits of life, and was protected, in some measure, by the opinion of political utility. The form and the seat of government were intimately blended together, nor was it esteemed possible to transport the one without destroying the other.⁸⁹ But the sovereignty of the capital was gradually annihilated in the extent of conquest; the provinces rose to the same level, and the vanquished nations acquired the name and privileges, without imbibing the partial affections, of Romans. During a long period, however, the remains of the ancient constitution and the influence of custom preserved the dignity of Rome. The emperors, though perhaps of African or Illyrian extraction, respected their adopted country, as the seat of their power and the centre of their extensive dominions. The emergencies of war very frequently required their presence on the frontiers; but Diocletian and Maximian were the first Roman princes who fixed, in time of peace, their ordinary residence in the provinces; and their conduct, however it might be suggested by private motives, was justified by

very specious considerations of policy. The court of the emperor of the West was, for the most part, established at Milan, whose situation, at the foot of the Alps, appeared far more convenient than that of Rome, for the important purpose of watching the motions of the barbarians of Germany. Milan soon assumed the splendour of an Imperial city. The houses are described as numerous and well built; the manners of the people as polished and liberal. A circus, a theatre, a mint, a palace, baths, which bore the name of their founder Maximian; porticoes adorned with statues, and a double circumference of walls, contributed to the beauty of the new capital; nor did it seem oppressed even by the proximity of Rome.⁹⁰

and sensibility, in opposition to a design of removing the seat of government from Rome to the neighbouring city of Veii.

⁸⁹ Julius Cæsar was reproached with the intention of removing the empire to Ilium or Alexandria. See Sueton. in Cæsar. c. 79. According to the ingenious conjecture of Le Fèvre and Dacier, the third ode of the third book of Horace was intended to divert Augustus from the execution of a similar design.

⁹⁰ See Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39], who likewise mentions the buildings erected by Maximian at Carthage, probably during the Moorish war. We shall insert some verses of Ausonius de Clar. Urb. v.:—

Et Mediolani mira omnia: copia rerum;
Innumere cultæque domus; facunda virorum
Iugenia, et mores læti: tum duplici muro
Amplificata loci species; populique voluptas
Circus; et inclusi moles cuneata Theatri;
Templa, Palatinæque arces, opulensque Moneta,
Et regio *Herculei* celebris sub honore lavacri.
Cunctaque marmoreis ornata Peristyla signis;
Mœniaque in valli formam circumdata labro,
Omnia quæ magnis operum velut æmula formis
Excellunt: nec juncta premit vicinia Romæ.

To rival the majesty of Rome was the ambition likewise of Diocletian, who employed his leisure, and the wealth of the East, and Nicomedia. in the embellishment of Nicomedia, a city placed on the verge of Europe and Asia, almost at an equal distance between the Danube and the Euphrates. By the taste of the monarch, and at the expense of the people, Nicomedia acquired, in the space of a few years, a degree of magnificence which might appear to have required the labour of ages, and became inferior only to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, in extent or populousness.⁹¹ The life of Diocletian and Maximian was a life of action, and a considerable portion of it was spent in camps, or in their long and frequent marches; but whenever the public business allowed them any relaxation, they seem to have retired with pleasure to their favourite residences of Nicomedia and Milan. Till Diocletian, in the twentieth year of his reign, celebrated his Roman triumph, it is extremely doubtful whether he ever visited the ancient capital of the empire. Even on that memorable occasion his stay did not exceed two months. Disgusted with the licentious familiarity of the people, he quitted Rome with precipitation thirteen days before it was expected that he should have appeared in the senate, invested with the ensigns of the consular dignity.⁹²

The dislike expressed by Diocletian towards Rome and Roman freedom was not the effect of momentary caprice, but the result of the most artful policy. That crafty prince had framed a new system of Imperial government, which was afterwards completed by the family of Constantine; and as the image of the old constitution was religiously preserved in the senate, he resolved to deprive that order of its small remains of power and consideration. We may recollect, about eight years before the elevation of Diocletian, the transient greatness and the ambitious hopes of the Roman senate. As long as that enthusiasm prevailed, many of the nobles imprudently displayed their zeal in the cause of freedom; and after the successors of Probus had withdrawn their countenance from the republican party, the senators were unable to disguise their impotent resentment. As the sovereign of Italy, Maximian was intrusted with the care of extinguishing this troublesome, rather than dangerous spirit, and the task was perfectly suited to his cruel temper. The most illustrious members of the senate, whom Dio-

Debasement of Rome and of the senate.

⁹¹ Lactant. de M. P. c. 17. Libanius, Orat. vi. p. 203 [ed. Morell. Paris, 1627].

⁹² Lactant. de M. P. c. 17. On a similar occasion, Ammianus mentions the *dicanitas plebis* as not very agreeable to an Imperial ear. (See l. xvi. c. 10.)^a

^a On the contrary, Ammianus says (he is speaking of Constantius), "*dicanitate plebis oblectabatur.*"—S.

cletian always affected to esteem, were involved, by his colleague, in the accusation of imaginary plots; and the possession of an elegant villa, or a well-cultivated estate, was interpreted as a convincing evidence of guilt.⁹³ The camp of the Prætorians, which had so long oppressed, began to protect, the majesty of Rome; and as those haughty troops were conscious of the decline of their power, they were naturally disposed to unite their strength with the authority of the senate. By the prudent measures of Diocletian, the numbers of the Prætorians were insensibly reduced, their privileges abolished,⁹⁴ and their place supplied by two faithful legions of Illyricum, who,

New bodies
of guards,
Jovians
and Her-
culians.

under the new titles of Jovians and Herculians, were appointed to perform the service of the Imperial guards.⁹⁵

But the most fatal though secret wound which the senate received from the hands of Diocletian and Maximian was inflicted by the inevitable operation of their absence. As long as the emperors resided at Rome, that assembly might be oppressed, but it could scarcely be neglected. The successors of Augustus exercised the power of dictating whatever laws their wisdom or caprice might suggest; but those laws were ratified by the sanction of the senate. The model of ancient freedom was preserved in its deliberations and decrees; and wise princes, who respected the prejudices of the Roman people, were in some measure obliged to assume the language and behaviour suitable to the general and first magistrate of the republic. In the armies and in the provinces they displayed the dignity of monarchs; and when they fixed their residence at a distance from the capital, they for ever laid aside the dissimulation which Augustus had recommended to his successors. In the exercise of the legislative as well as the executive power, the sovereign advised with his ministers, instead of consulting the great council of the nation. The name of the senate was mentioned with honour till the last period of the empire; the vanity of its members was still flattered with honorary distinctions;⁹⁶ but the assembly which had so long been the source, and so long the instrument of power, was respectfully suffered to sink into oblivion. The senate of Rome, losing all con-

⁹³ Lactantius accuses Maximian of destroying fictis criminationibus lumina senatûs (de M. P. c. 8). Aurelius Victor speaks very doubtfully of the faith of Diocletian towards his friends.

⁹⁴ Truncatæ vires urbis, imminuto prætoriarum cohortium atque in armis vulgi numero. Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39]. Lactantius attributes to Galerius the prosecution of the same plan (c. 26).

⁹⁵ They were old corps stationed in Illyricum; and, according to the ancient establishment, they each consisted of six thousand men. They had acquired much reputation by the use of the *plumbatæ*, or darts loaded with lead. Each soldier carried five of these, which he darted from a considerable distance with great strength and dexterity. See Vegetius, i. 17.

⁹⁶ See the Theodosian Code, l. vi. tit. ii. with Godefroy's commentary.

nection with the Imperial court and the actual constitution, was left a venerable but useless monument of antiquity on the Capitoline hill.

When the Roman princes had lost sight of the senate and of their ancient capital, they easily forgot the origin and nature of their legal power. The civil offices of consul, of proconsul, of censor, and of tribune, by the union of which it had been formed, betrayed to the people its republican extraction. Those modest titles were laid aside;⁹⁷ and if they still distinguished their high station by the appellation of Emperor, or IMPERATOR, that word was understood in a new and more dignified sense, and no longer denoted the general of the Roman armies, but the sovereign of the Roman world. The name of Emperor, which was at first of a military nature, was associated with another of a more servile kind. The epithet of DOMINUS, or Lord, in its primitive signification, was expressive not of the authority of a prince over his subjects, or of a commander over his soldiers, but of the despotic power of a master over his domestic slaves.⁹⁸ Viewing it in that odious light, it had been rejected with abhorrence by the first Cæsars. Their resistance insensibly became more feeble, and the name less odious; till at length the style of *our Lord and Emperor* was not only bestowed by flattery, but was regularly admitted into the laws and public monuments. Such lofty epithets were sufficient to elate and satisfy the most excessive vanity; and if the successors of Diocletian still declined the title of King, it seems to have been the effect not so much of their moderation as of their delicacy. Wherever the Latin tongue was in use (and it was the language of government throughout the empire), the Imperial title, as it was peculiar to themselves, conveyed a more respectable idea than the name of king, which they must have shared with an hundred barbarian chieftains; or which, at the best, they could derive only from Romulus, or from Tarquin. But the sentiments of the East were very different from those of the West. From the earliest period of history, the sovereigns of Asia had been celebrated in the Greek language by the title of BASILEUS, or King; and since it was considered as the first distinction among men, it was soon employed by the servile provincials of the East in their humble addresses to the Roman throne.⁹⁹ Even the attributes, or at least the titles, of the

⁹⁷ See the 12th dissertation in Spanheim's excellent work *de Usu Numismatum*. From medals, inscriptions, and historians, he examines every title separately, and traces it from Augustus to the moment of its disappearing.

⁹⁸ Pliny (in *Panegy.* c. 3, 55, &c.) speaks of *Dominus* with execration, as synonymous to Tyrant, and opposite to Prince. And the same Pliny regularly gives that title (in the tenth book of the epistles) to his friend rather than master, the virtuous Trajan. This strange contradiction puzzles the commentators who think, and the translators who can write.

⁹⁹ Synesius *de Regno*, edit. Petav. p. 15. I am indebted for this quotation to the Abbé de la Bléterie.

DIVINITY, were usurped by Diocletian and Maximian, who transmitted them to a succession of Christian emperors.¹⁰⁰ Such extravagant compliments, however, soon lose their impiety by losing their meaning; and when the ear is once accustomed to the sound, they are heard with indifference as vague though excessive professions of respect.

From the time of Augustus to that of Diocletian, the Roman princes, conversing in a familiar manner among their fellow-citizens, were saluted only with the same respect that was usually paid to senators and magistrates. Their principal distinction was the Imperial or military robe of purple; whilst the senatorial garment was marked by a broad, and the equestrian by a narrow, band or stripe of the same honourable colour. The pride, or rather the policy, of Diocletian, engaged that artful prince to introduce the stately magnificence of the court of Persia.¹⁰¹ He ventured to assume the diadem, an ornament detested by the Romans as the odious ensign of royalty, and the use of which had been considered as the most desperate act of the madness of Caligula. It was no more than a broad white fillet set with pearls, which encircled the emperor's head. The sumptuous robes of Diocletian and his successors were of silk and gold; and it is remarked with indignation that even their shoes were studded with the most precious gems. The access to their sacred person was every day rendered more difficult by the institution of new forms and cere-

Diocletian assumes the diadem, and introduces the Persian ceremonial.

¹⁰⁰ See Van Dale de Consecratione, p. 354, &c. It was customary for the emperors to mention (in the preamble of laws) their *numen*, *sacred majesty*, *divine oracles*, &c. According to Tillemont, Gregory Nazianzen complains most bitterly of the profanation, especially when it was practised by an Arian emperor.^a

¹⁰¹ See Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissert. xii.

^a In the time of the republic, says Hegewisch, when the consuls, the prætors, and the other magistrates appeared in public to perform the functions of their office, their dignity was announced both by the symbols which use had consecrated, and the brilliant cortège by which they were accompanied. But this dignity belonged to the office, not to the individual; this pomp belonged to the magistrate, not to the man. ** The consul, followed, in the comitia, by all the senate, the prætors, the quæstors, the ædiles, the lictors, the apparitors, and the heralds, on re-entering his house, was served only by freedmen and by his slaves. The first emperors went no further. Tiberius had, for his personal attendance, only a moderate number of slaves and a few freedmen (Tacit. Ann. iv. 7). But in proportion as the republican forms disappeared one after another, the inclination of the em-

perors to environ themselves with personal pomp displayed itself more and more. ** The magnificence and the ceremonial of the East were entirely introduced by Diocletian, and were consecrated by Constantine to the Imperial use. Thenceforth the palace, the court, the table, all the personal attendance, distinguished the emperor from his subjects still more than his superior dignity. The organisation which Diocletian gave to his new court attached less honour and distinction to rank than to services performed towards the members of the Imperial family. Hegewisch, Historical Essay on the Roman Finances

Few historians have characterised in a more philosophic manner the influence of a new institution.—G.

It is singular that the son of a slave reduced the haughty aristocracy of Rome to the offices of servitude.—M.

monies. The avenues of the palace were strictly guarded by the various *schools*, as they began to be called, of domestic officers. The interior apartments were intrusted to the jealous vigilance of the eunuchs; the increase of whose numbers and influence was the most infallible symptom of the progress of despotism. When a subject was at length admitted to the Imperial presence, he was obliged, whatever might be his rank, to fall prostrate on the ground, and to adore, according to the eastern fashion, the divinity of his lord and master.¹⁰² Diocletian was a man of sense, who, in the course of private as well as public life, had formed a just estimate both of himself and of mankind: nor is it easy to conceive that in substituting the manners of Persia to those of Rome he was seriously actuated by so mean a principle as that of vanity. He flattered himself that an ostentation of splendour and luxury would subdue the imagination of the multitude; that the monarch would be less exposed to the rude licence of the people and the soldiers, as his person was secluded from the public view; and that habits of submission would insensibly be productive of sentiments of veneration. Like the modesty affected by Augustus, the state maintained by Diocletian was a theatrical representation; but it must be confessed that, of the two comedies, the former was of a much more liberal and manly character than the latter. It was the aim of the one to disguise, and the object of the other to display, the unbounded power which the emperors possessed over the Roman world.

Ostentation was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian. The second was division. He divided the empire, the provinces, and every branch of the civil as well as military administration. He multiplied the wheels of the machine of government, and rendered its operations

New form of administration, two Augusti and two Cæsars.

less rapid but more secure. Whatever advantages and whatever defects might attend these innovations, they must be ascribed in a very great degree to the first inventor; but as the new frame of policy was gradually improved and completed by succeeding princes, it will be more satisfactory to delay the consideration of it till the season of its full maturity and perfection.¹⁰³ Reserving, therefore, for the reign of Constantine a more exact picture of the new empire, we shall content ourselves with describing the principal and decisive outline, as it was traced by the hand of Diocletian. He had asso-

¹⁰² Aurelius Victor. Eutropius, ix. 26 [16]. It appears by the Panegyrists that the Romans were soon reconciled to the name and ceremony of adoration.

¹⁰³ The innovations introduced by Diocletian are chiefly deduced, 1st, from some very strong passages in Lactantius; and, 2ndly, from the new and various offices which, in the Theodosian code, appear *already* established in the beginning of the reign of Constantine.

ciated three colleagues in the exercise of the supreme power; and as he was convinced that the abilities of a single man were inadequate to the public defence, he considered the joint administration of four princes not as a temporary expedient, but as a fundamental law of the constitution. It was his intention that the two elder princes should be distinguished by the use of the diadem, and the title of *Augusti*; that, as affection or esteem might direct their choice, they should regularly call to their assistance two subordinate colleagues; and that the *Cæsars*, rising in their turn to the first rank, should supply an uninterrupted succession of emperors. The empire was divided into four parts. The East and Italy were the most honourable, the Danube and the Rhine the most laborious stations. The former claimed the presence of the *Augusti*, the latter were intrusted to the administration of the *Cæsars*. The strength of the legions was in the hands of the four partners of sovereignty, and the despair of successively vanquishing four formidable rivals might intimidate the ambition of an aspiring general. In their civil government the emperors were supposed to exercise the undivided power of the monarch, and their edicts, inscribed with their joint names, were received in all the provinces, as promulgated by their mutual councils and authority. Notwithstanding these precautions, the political union of the Roman world was gradually dissolved, and a principle of division was introduced, which, in the course of a few years, occasioned the perpetual separation of the eastern and western empires.

The system of Diocletian was accompanied with another very material disadvantage, which cannot even at present be
Increase of taxes. totally overlooked; a more expensive establishment, and consequently an increase of taxes, and the oppression of the people. Instead of a modest family of slaves and freedmen, such as had contented the simple greatness of Augustus and Trajan, three or four magnificent courts were established in the various parts of the empire, and as many Roman *kings* contended with each other and with the Persian monarch for the vain superiority of pomp and luxury. The number of ministers, of magistrates, of officers, and of servants, who filled the different departments of the state, was multiplied beyond the example of former times; and (if we may borrow the warm expression of a contemporary), "when the proportion of those who received exceeded the proportion of those who contributed, the provinces were oppressed by the weight of tributes."¹⁰⁴ From this period to the extinction of the empire, it would be easy to deduce an uninterrupted series of clamours and complaints. According to his religion and situation, each writer chooses either Diocletian, or Con-

¹⁰⁴ Lactant. de M. P. c. 7.

stantine, or Valens, or Theodosius, for the object of his invectives; but they unanimously agree in representing the burden of the public impositions, and particularly the land-tax and capitation, as the intolerable and increasing grievance of their own times. From such a concurrence, an impartial historian, who is obliged to extract truth from satire, as well as from panegyric, will be inclined to divide the blame among the princes whom they accuse, and to ascribe their exactions much less to their personal vices than to the uniform system of their administration.^a The emperor Diocletian was indeed the author of that system; but during his reign the growing evil was confined within the bounds of modesty and discretion, and he deserves the reproach of establishing pernicious precedents, rather than of exercising actual oppression.¹⁰⁵ It may be added, that his revenues were managed with prudent economy; and that, after all the current expenses were discharged, there still remained in the Imperial treasury an ample provision either for judicious liberality or for any emergency of the state.

¹⁰⁵ *Indicta lex nova quæ sane illorum temporum modestiâ tolerabilis, in perniciem processit.* Aurel. Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39]; who has treated the character of Diocletian with good sense, though in bad Latin.

^a The most curious document which has come to light since the publication of Gibbon's History is the edict of Diocletian published from an inscription found at Eskihiissâr (Stratoniceia), by Col. Leake. This inscription was first copied by Sherard, afterwards much more completely by Mr. Bankes. It is confirmed and illustrated by a more imperfect copy of the same edict, found in the Levant by a gentleman of Aix, and brought to this country by M. Vescovall. This edict was issued in the name of the four Cæsars, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, and Galerius. It fixed a maximum of prices throughout the empire for all the necessaries and commodities of life. The preamble insists, with great vehemence, on the extortion and inhumanity of the venders and merchants. *Quis enim adeo optumsi (obtus) pectoris et a sensu inhumanitatis extorris est, qui ignorare potest immo non senserit in venalibus rebus, quæ vel in mercimoniis aguntur vel diurnâ urbium conversatione tractantur, in tantum se licentiam difusisse, ut effrenata libido rapient(tium nec re)rum copia nec annorum ubertatibus mitigaretur?* Among the articles of which the maximum value is assessed, are oil, salt, honey, butchers' meat, poultry, game, fish, vegetables, fruit, the wages of labourers and artisans, schoolmasters and orators, clothes, skins, boots and shoes, harness, timber, corn, wine, and beer (zythus). The deprecia-

tion in the value of money, or the rise in the price of commodities, had been so great during the last century, that butchers' meat, which in the second century of the empire was in Rome about two denarii the pound, was now fixed at a maximum of eight: Col. Leake supposes the average price could not be less than four: at the same time the maximum of the wages of the agricultural labourers was twenty-five. The whole edict is, perhaps, the most gigantic effort of a blind though well-intentioned despotism to control that which is, and ought to be, beyond the regulation of the government. See an Edict of Diocletian, by Col. Leake, London, 1826.

Col. Leake has not observed that this edict is expressly named in the treatise de Mort. Persecut. ch. 7. *Idem cum variis iniquitatibus immensam faceret caritatem, legem pretiis rerum venalium statuere conatus est.*—M.

An excellent edition of this edict has been published, with a commentary, by Mommsen, who shows that it was issued in A.D. 301. The price of all commodities is given in denarii, but unfortunately it is impossible to determine the value of this denarius: it was not the well-known silver coin, but a copper coin of much inferior value. See *Das Edict Diocletians De Pretiis Rerum Venalium*, herausgegeben von Theodor Mommsen, Leipzig, 1851.—S.

It was in the twenty-first year of his reign that Diocletian executed his memorable resolution of abdicating the empire; an action more naturally to have been expected from the elder or the younger Antoninus than from a prince who had never practised the lessons of philosophy either in the attainment or in the use of supreme power. Diocletian acquired the glory of giving to the world the first example of a resignation¹⁰⁶ which has not been very frequently imitated by succeeding monarchs. The parallel of Charles the Fifth, however, will naturally offer itself to our mind, not only since the eloquence of a modern historian has rendered that name so familiar to an English reader, but from the very striking resemblance between the characters of the two emperors, whose political abilities were superior to their military genius, and whose specious virtues were much less the effect of nature than of art. The abdication of Charles appears to have been hastened by the vicissitude of fortune; and the disappointment of his favourite schemes urged him to relinquish a power which he found inadequate to his ambition. But the reign of Diocletian had flowed with a tide of uninterrupted success; nor was it till after he had vanquished all his enemies, and accomplished all his designs, that he seems to have entertained any serious thoughts of resigning the empire. Neither Charles nor Diocletian were arrived at a very advanced period of life; since the one was only fifty-five, and the other was no more than fifty-nine years of age; but the active life of those princes, their wars and journeys, the cares of royalty, and their application to business, had already impaired their constitution, and brought on the infirmities of a premature old age.¹⁰⁷

Notwithstanding the severity of a very cold and rainy winter, Diocletian left Italy soon after the ceremony of his triumph, and began his progress towards the East round the circuit of the Illyrian provinces. From the inclemency of the weather and the fatigue of the journey, he soon contracted a slow illness; and though he made easy marches, and was generally carried in a close litter, his disorder, before he arrived at Nicomedia, about the end of the summer, was become very serious and alarming. During the whole winter he was confined to his palace; his danger inspired a general and unaffected concern; but the people could only judge of the various alterations of his health from the joy or consternation which they discovered in the countenances and behaviour

A.D. 304.
Long illness
of Diocletian.

¹⁰⁶ Solus omnium, post conditum Romanum Imperium, qui ex tanto fastigio sponte ad privatæ vitæ statum civilitatemque remearet. Eutrop. ix. 28 [16].

¹⁰⁷ The particulars of the journey and illness are taken from Lactantius (c. 17), who may sometimes be admitted as an evidence of public facts, though very seldom of private anecdotes.

of his attendants. The rumour of his death was for some time universally believed, and it was supposed to be concealed with a view to prevent the troubles that might have happened during the absence of the Cæsar Galerius. At length, however, on the first of March, Diocletian once more appeared in public, but so pale and emaciated, that he could scarcely have been recognised by those to whom his person was the most familiar. It was time to put an end to the painful struggle, which he had sustained during more than a year, between the care of his health and that of his dignity. The former required indulgence and relaxation, the latter compelled him to direct, from the bed of sickness, the administration of a great empire. He resolved to pass the remainder of his days in honourable repose, to place his glory beyond the reach of fortune, and to relinquish the theatre of the world to his younger and more active associates.¹⁰⁸

The ceremony of his abdication was performed in a spacious plain, about three miles from Nicomedia. The emperor ascended a lofty throne, and, in a speech full of reason and dignity, declared his intention, both to the people and to the soldiers who were assembled on this extraordinary occasion. As soon as he had divested himself of the purple, he withdrew from the gazing multitude, and, traversing the city in a covered chariot, proceeded without delay to the favourite retirement which he had chosen in his native country of Dalmatia. On the same day, which was the first of May,¹⁰⁹ Maximian, as it had been previously concerted, made his resignation of the Imperial dignity at Milan. Even in the splendour of the Roman triumph, Diocletian had meditated his design of abdicating the government. As he wished to secure the obedience of Maximian, he exacted from him either a general assurance that he would submit his actions to the authority of his benefactor, or a particular promise that he would descend from the throne whenever he should receive the advice and the example.

¹⁰⁸ Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 39] ascribes the abdication, which had been so variously accounted for, to two causes: 1st, Diocletian's contempt of ambition; and 2ndly, His apprehension of impending troubles. One of the panegyrists (vi. [v.] 9) mentions the age and infirmities of Diocletian as a very natural reason for his retirement.^a

¹⁰⁹ The difficulties as well as mistakes attending the dates both of the year and of the day of Diocletian's abdication are perfectly cleared up by Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 525, note 19, and by Pagi ad annum.

^a Constantine (Orat. ad Sanct. c. 401) passage, while he admits that his long illness might produce a temporary depression of mind, connected with the conflagration of the palace at Nicomedia by lightning, was the cause of his abdication. But the philosophical conduct of Diocletian in his retreat, and the influence which he still retained on public affairs.—M.

This engagement, though it was confirmed by the solemnity of an oath before the altar of the Capitoline Jupiter,¹¹⁰ would have proved a feeble restraint on the fierce temper of Maximian, whose passion was the love of power, and who neither desired present tranquillity nor future reputation. But he yielded, however reluctantly, to the ascendant which his wiser colleague had acquired over him, and retired immediately after his abdication to a villa in Lucania, where it was almost impossible that such an impatient spirit could find any lasting tranquillity.

Diocletian, who, from a servile origin, had raised himself to the throne, passed the nine last years of his life in a private condition. Reason had dictated, and content seems to have accompanied, his retreat, in which he enjoyed for a long time the respect of those princes to whom he had resigned the possession of the world.¹¹¹ It is seldom that minds long exercised in business have formed any habits of conversing with themselves, and in the loss of power they principally regret the want of occupation. The amusements of letters and of devotion, which afford so many resources in solitude, were incapable of fixing the attention of Diocletian; but he had preserved, or at least he soon recovered, a taste for the most innocent as well as natural pleasures, and his leisure hours were sufficiently employed in building, planting, and gardening. His answer to Maximian is deservedly celebrated. He

Retirement of Diocletian at Salona.
His philosophy,
was solicited by that restless old man to reassume the reins of government and the Imperial purple. He rejected the temptation with a smile of pity, calmly observing that, if he could show Maximian the cabbages which he had planted with his own hands at Salona, he should no longer be urged to relinquish the enjoyment of happiness for the pursuit of power.¹¹² In his conversations with his friends, he frequently acknowledged, that of all arts the most difficult was the art of reigning; and he expressed himself on that favourite topic with a degree of warmth which could be the result only of experience. "How often," was he accustomed to say, "is it the interest of four or five ministers to combine together to deceive their sovereign! Secluded from mankind by his exalted dignity, the truth is concealed from his knowledge; he can see only with their eyes, he hears nothing but their misrepresentations.

¹¹⁰ See Panegy. Veter. vi. [v.] 9. The oration was pronounced after Maximian had reassumed the purple.

¹¹¹ Eumenius pays him a very fine compliment: "At enim divinum illum virum, qui primus imperium et participavit et posuit, consilii et facti sui non ponit; nec amissae se putat quod sponte transcripsit. Felix beatusque vere quem vestra, tantorum principum, colunt obsequia privatum." Panegy. Vet. vii. [vi.] 15.

¹¹² We are obliged to the younger Victor [Epit. c. 39] for this celebrated bon mot. Eutropius [l. ix. c. 16] mentions the thing in a more general manner.

“He confers the most important offices upon vice and weakness, and disgraces the most virtuous and deserving among his subjects. By such infamous arts,” added Diocletian, “the best and wisest princes are sold to the venal corruption of their courtiers.”¹¹³ A just estimate of greatness, and the assurance of immortal fame, improve our relish for the pleasures of retirement; but the Roman emperor had filled too important a character in the world to enjoy without alloy the comforts and security of a private condition. It was impossible that he could remain ignorant of the troubles which afflicted the empire after his abdication. It was impossible that he could be indifferent to their consequences. Fear, sorrow, and discontent sometimes pursued him into the solitude of Salona. His tenderness, or at least his pride, was deeply wounded by the misfortunes of his wife and daughter; and the last moments of Diocletian were embittered by some affronts, which Licinius and Constantine might have spared the father of so many emperors, and the first author of their own fortune. A report, though of a very doubtful nature, has reached our times, that he prudently withdrew himself from their power by a voluntary death.¹¹⁴

and death,
A.D. 313.

Before we dismiss the consideration of the life and character of Diocletian, we may for a moment direct our view to the place of his retirement. Salona, a principal city of his native province of Dalmatia, was near two hundred Roman miles (according to the measurement of the public high-ways) from Aquileia and the confines of Italy, and about two hundred and seventy from Sirmium, the usual residence of the emperors whenever they visited the Illyrian frontier.¹¹⁵ A miserable village still preserves the name of Salona; but so late as the sixteenth century the remains of a theatre, and a confused prospect of broken arches and marble columns, continued to attest its ancient splendour.¹¹⁶ About six or seven miles from the city Diocletian constructed a magnificent palace, and we may infer, from the greatness of the work, how long he had meditated his design of abdicating the empire. The choice of a spot which united all that could contribute either to health or to luxury did not require the partiality of a native. “The soil was dry and fertile, the air is pure and wholesome, and, though

Description
of Salona
and the
adjacent
country.

¹¹³ Hist. August. p. 223, 224. [Vopisc. Aurel. c. 43.] Vopiscus had learned this conversation from his father.

¹¹⁴ The younger Victor [Epit. c. 39] slightly mentions the report. But as Diocletian had disobliterated a powerful and successful party, his memory has been loaded with every crime and misfortune. It has been affirmed that he died raving mad, that he was condemned as a criminal by the Roman senate, &c.

¹¹⁵ See the Itiner. p. 269, 272, edit. Wessel.

¹¹⁶ The Abate Fortis, in his Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 43 (printed at Venice in the year 1774, in two small volumes in quarto), quotes a MS. account of the antiquities of Salona, composed by Giambattista Giustiniani about the middle of the xvth century.

"extremely hot during the summer months, this country seldom feels those sultry and noxious winds to which the coasts of Istria and some parts of Italy are exposed. The views from the palace are no less beautiful than the soil and climate were inviting. Towards the west lies the fertile shore that stretches along the Adriatic, in which a number of small islands are scattered in such a manner as to give this part of the sea the appearance of a great lake. On the north side lies the bay, which led to the ancient city of Salona; and the country beyond it, appearing in sight, forms a proper contrast to that more extensive prospect of water which the Adriatic presents both to the south and to the east. Towards the north the view is terminated by high and irregular mountains, situated at a proper distance, and in many places covered with villages, woods, and vineyards."¹¹⁷

Though Constantine, from a very obvious prejudice, affects to mention the palace of Diocletian with contempt,¹¹⁸ yet one of their successors, who could only see it in a neglected and mutilated state, celebrates its magnificence in terms of the highest admiration.¹¹⁹ It covered an extent of ground consisting of between nine and ten English acres. The form was quadrangular, flanked with sixteen towers. Two of the sides were near six hundred, and the other two near seven hundred, feet in length. The whole was constructed of a beautiful free-stone, extracted from the neighbouring quarries of Trau, or Tragutium, and very little inferior to marble itself. Four streets, intersecting each other at right angles, divided the several parts of this great edifice, and the approach to the principal apartment was from a very stately entrance, which is still denominated the Golden Gate. The approach was terminated by a *peristylum* of granite columns, on one side of which we discover the square temple of Æsculapius, on the other the octagon temple of Jupiter. The latter of those deities Diocletian revered as the patron of his fortunes, the former as the protector of his health. By comparing the present remains with the precepts of Vitruvius, the several parts of the building, the baths, bedchamber, the *atrium*, the *basilica*, and the Cyzicene, Corinthian, and Egyptian halls have been described

¹¹⁷ Adam's Antiquities of Diocletian's Palace at Spalatro, p. 6. We may add a circumstance or two from the Abate Fortis: the little stream of the Hyader, mentioned by Lucan, produces most exquisite trout, which a sagacious writer, perhaps a monk, supposes to have been one of the principal reasons that determined Diocletian in the choice of his retirement. Fortis, p. 45. The same author (p. 38) observes that a taste for agriculture is reviving at Spalatro; and that an experimental farm has lately been established near the city by a society of gentlemen.

¹¹⁸ Constantin. Orat. ad Coetum Sanct. c. 25. In this sermon, the emperor, or the bishop who composed it for him, affects to relate the miserable end of all the persecutors of the church.

¹¹⁹ Constantin. Porphyry. de Statu Imper. p. 86 [ed. Paris; vol. iii. p. 125, ed. Bonn].

with some degree of precision, or at least of probability. Their forms were various, their proportions just, but they were all attended with two imperfections, very repugnant to our modern notions of taste and conveniency. These stately rooms had neither windows nor chimneys. They were lighted from the top (for the building seems to have consisted of no more than one story), and they received their heat by the help of pipes that were conveyed along the walls. The range of principal apartments was protected towards the south-west by a portico five hundred and seventeen feet long, which must have formed a very noble and delightful walk, when the beauties of painting and sculpture were added to those of the prospect.

Had this magnificent edifice remained in a solitary country, it would have been exposed to the ravages of time; but it might, perhaps, have escaped the rapacious industry of man. The village of Aspalathus,¹²⁰ and, long afterwards, the provincial town of Spalatro, have grown out of its ruins. The Golden Gate now opens into the market-place. St. John the Baptist has usurped the honours of Æsculapius; and the temple of Jupiter, under the protection of the Virgin, is converted into the cathedral church. For this account of Diocletian's palace we are principally indebted to an ingenious artist of our own time and country, whom a very liberal curiosity carried into the heart of Dalmatia.¹²¹ But there is room to suspect that the elegance of his designs and engraving has somewhat flattered the objects which it was their purpose to represent. We are informed by a more recent and very judicious traveller that the awful ruins of Spalatro are not less expressive of the decline of the arts than of the greatness of the Roman empire in the time of Diocletian.¹²² If such was indeed the state of architecture, we must naturally believe that painting and sculpture had experienced a still more sensible decay. 'The practice of architecture is directed by a few general and even mechanical rules. But sculpture, and, above all, painting, propose to themselves the imitation not only of the forms of nature, but of the characters and passions of the human soul. In those sublime arts the dexterity of the hand is of little avail, unless

Decline of
the arts.

¹²⁰ D'Anville, *Géographie Ancienne*, tom. i. p. 162.

¹²¹ Messieurs Adam and Clerisseau, attended by two draughtsmen, visited Spalatro in the month of July, 1757. The magnificent work which their journey produced was published in London seven years afterwards.

¹²² I shall quote the words of the Abate Fortis. "E'bastevolmente nota agli amatori dell' Architettura, e dell' Antichità, l'opera del Signor ADAMS, che a donato molto a que' superbi vestigi coll' abituale eleganza del suo toccalapìs e del bulino. "In generale la rozzezza del scalpello, e'l cattivo gusto del secolo vi gareggiano colla "magnificenza del fabricato." See *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, p. 40.^a

^a Sir Gardner Wilkinson gives an interesting account of the remains of the palace in his '*Dalmatia and Montenegro*,' vol. i. p. 124, *seq.*—S.

it is animated by fancy and guided by the most correct taste and observation.

It is almost unnecessary to remark that the civil distractions of the empire, the licence of the soldiers, the inroads of the barbarians, and the progress of despotism, had proved very unfavourable to genius, and even to learning. The succession of Illyrian princes restored the empire without restoring the sciences. Their military education was not calculated to inspire them with the love of letters; and even the mind of Diocletian, however active and capacious in business, was totally uninformed by study or speculation. The professions of law and physic are of such common use and certain profit that they will always secure a sufficient number of practitioners endowed with a reasonable degree of abilities and knowledge; but it does not appear that the students in those two faculties appeal to any celebrated masters who have flourished within that period. The voice of poetry was silent. History was reduced to dry and confused abridgments, alike destitute of amusement and instruction. A languid and affected eloquence was still retained in the pay and service of the emperors, who encouraged not any arts except those which contributed to the gratification of their pride or the defence of their power.¹²³

The declining age of learning and of mankind is marked, however, by the rise and rapid progress of the new Platonists. The school of Alexandria silenced those of Athens; and the ancient sects enrolled themselves under the banners of the more fashionable teachers, who recommended their system by the novelty of their method and the austerity of their manners. Several of these masters—Ammonius, Plotinus, Amelius, and Porphyry¹²⁴—were men of profound thought and intense application; but, by mistaking the true object of philosophy, their labours contributed much less to improve than to corrupt the human understanding. The knowledge that is suited to our situation and powers, the whole compass of moral, natural, and mathematical science, was neglected by the new Platonists; whilst they exhausted their strength in the verbal disputes of metaphysics, attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world,

¹²³ The orator Eumenius was secretary to the emperors Maximian and Constantius, and Professor of Rhetoric in the college of Autun. His salary was six hundred thousand sesterces, which, according to the lowest computation of that age, must have exceeded three thousand pounds a-year. He generously requested the permission of employing it in rebuilding the college. See his Oration *De Restaurandis Scholis* [c. 11]; which, though not exempt from vanity, may atone for his panegyrics.

¹²⁴ Porphyry died about the time of Diocletian's abdication. The life of his master Plotinus, which he composed, will give us the most complete idea of the genius of the sect and the manners of its professors. This very curious piece is inserted in Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Græca*, tom. iv. p. 88-148.

and studied to reconcile Aristotle with Plato, on subjects of which both these philosophers were as ignorant as the rest of mankind. Consuming their reason in these deep but unsubstantial meditations, their minds were exposed to illusions of fancy. They flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporeal prison; claimed a familiar intercourse with dæmons and spirits; and, by a very singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic. The ancient sages had derided the popular superstition; after disguising its extravagance by the thin pretence of allegory, the disciples of Plotinus and Porphyry became its most zealous defenders. As they agreed with the Christians in a few mysterious points of faith, they attacked the remainder of their theological system with all the fury of civil war. The new Platonists would scarcely deserve a place in the history of science, but in that of the church the mention of them will very frequently occur.

CHAPTER XIV.

TROUBLES AFTER THE ABDICATION OF DIOCLETIAN — DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS
 — ELEVATION OF CONSTANTINE AND MAXENTIUS — SIX EMPERORS AT THE
 SAME TIME — DEATH OF MAXIMIAN AND GALERIUS — VICTORIES OF CON-
 STANTINE OVER MAXENTIUS AND LICINIUS — REUNION OF THE EMPIRE
 UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CONSTANTINE.

THE balance of power established by Diocletian subsisted no longer than while it was sustained by the firm and dexterous hand of the founder. It required such a fortunate mixture of different tempers and abilities as could scarcely be found, or even expected, a second time; two emperors without jealousy, two Cæsars without ambition, and the same general interest invariably pursued by four independent princes. The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian was succeeded by eighteen years of discord and confusion. The empire was afflicted by five civil wars; and the remainder of the time was not so much a state of tranquillity as a suspension of arms between several hostile monarchs, who, viewing each other with an eye of fear and hatred, strove to increase their respective forces at the expense of their subjects.

As soon as Diocletian and Maximian had resigned the purple, their station, according to the rules of the new constitution, was filled by the two Cæsars, Constantius and Galerius, who immediately assumed the title of Augustus.¹ The honours of seniority and precedence were allowed to the former of those princes, and he continued under a new appellation to administer his ancient department of Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The government of those ample provinces was sufficient to exercise his talents and to satisfy his ambition. Clemency, temperance, and moderation distinguished the amiable character of Constantius, and his fortunate subjects had frequently occasion to compare the virtues of their sovereign with the passions of Maximian, and even with the arts of Diocletian.² Instead of imitating their eastern pride and magnificence, Constantius preserved the modesty of a Roman prince. He declared, with unaffected sincerity, that his most valued treasure was

Period of
 civil wars
 and con-
 fusion.
 A.D. 305-323.

Character
 and situation
 of Constan-
 tius.

¹ M. de Montesquieu (*Considérations sur la Grandeur et la Décadence des Romains*, c. 17) supposes, on the authority of Orosius and Eusebius, that, on this occasion, the empire, for the first time, was *really* divided into two parts. It is difficult, however, to discover in what respect the plan of Galerius differed from that of Diocletian.

² Hic non modo amabilis, sed etiam venerabilis Gallis fuit; præcipue quòd Diocletiani suspectam prudentiam, et Maximiani sanguinariam violentiam imperio ejus evaserant. Eutrop. Breviar. x. i.

in the hearts of his people; and that, whenever the dignity of the throne or the danger of the state required any extraordinary supply, he could depend with confidence on their gratitude and liberality.³ The provincials of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, sensible of his worth, and of their own happiness, reflected with anxiety on the declining health of the emperor Constantius, and the tender age of his numerous family, the issue of his second marriage with the daughter of Maximian.

The stern temper of Galerius was cast in a very different mould; and while he commanded the esteem of his subjects, he seldom condescended to solicit their affections. His fame Of Galerius. in arms, and, above all, the success of the Persian war, had elated his haughty mind, which was naturally impatient of a superior, or even of an equal. If it were possible to rely on the partial testimony of an injudicious writer, we might ascribe the abdication of Diocletian to the menaces of Galerius, and relate the particulars of a *private* conversation between the two princes, in which the former discovered as much pusillanimity as the latter displayed ingratitude and arrogance.⁴ But these obscure anecdotes are sufficiently refuted by an impartial view of the character and conduct of Diocletian. Whatever might otherwise have been his intentions, if he had apprehended any danger from the violence of Galerius, his good sense would have instructed him to prevent the ignominious contest; and as he had held the sceptre with glory, he would have resigned it without disgrace.

³ *Divitiis Provincialium (mel. provinciarum) ac privatorum studens, fisci commoda non admodum affectans; ducensque melius publicas opes a privatis haberi, quam intra unum claustrum reservari. Id. ibid.* He carried this maxim so far, that, whenever he gave an entertainment, he was obliged to borrow a service of plate.

⁴ *Lactantius de Mort. Persecutor. c. 18.* Were the particulars of this conference more consistent with truth and decency, we might still ask how they came to the knowledge of an obscure rhetorician? "But there are many historians who put us in mind of the admirable saying of the great Condé to Cardinal de Retz: 'Ces coquins nous font parler et agir comme ils auroient fait eux-mêmes à notre place.'"

^a This attack upon Lactantius is unfounded. Lactantius was so far from having been an obscure rhetorician, that he had taught rhetoric publicly, and with the greatest success, first in Africa, and afterwards in Nicomedia. His reputation obtained him the esteem of Constantine, who invited him to his court, and intrusted to him the education of his son Crispus. —G.

But it should be borne in mind that the authorship of the treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum* is uncertain. The piece is wanting in the earlier editions of Lactantius, and was first brought to light by Stephen Baluze, who printed it at Paris in his *Miscellanea* (vol. ii. 1679), from an ancient MS. bearing the inscription "*Lucii Cæcilii incipit liber ad Donatum Confessorem de Mortibus Persecutorum.*" Ba-

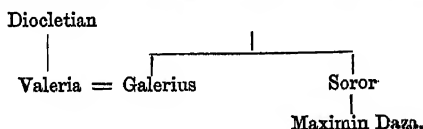
luze entertained no doubt that he had discovered the tract of Lactantius, quoted by Hieronymus as "*De Persecutione Liber unus,*" an opinion corroborated by the fact that Cæcilius was one of the names of Lactantius, by the date, by the dedication to Donatus—apparently the same person with the Donatus addressed in the discourse *De Ira Dei*—and by the general resemblance in style and expression; but these arguments are not conclusive, and most impartial critics will admit the justice of Dean Milman's opinion, that "the fame of Lactantius for eloquence, as well as for truth, would suffer no loss if it should be adjudged to some more 'obscure rhetorician.'" On the authorship of the treatise, see Smith's *Dict. of Greek and Roman Biog.* vol. i. p. 526.—S.

After the elevation of Constantius and Galerius to the rank of *Augusti*, two new *Cæsars* were required to supply their place, and to complete the system of the Imperial government. Diocletian was sincerely desirous of withdrawing himself from the world; he considered Galerius, who had married his daughter, as the firmest support of his family and of the empire; and he consented, without reluctance, that his successor should assume the merit as well as the envy of the important nomination. It was fixed without consulting the interest or inclination of the princes of the West. Each of them had a son who was arrived at the age of manhood, and who might have been deemed the most natural candidates for the vacant honour. But the impotent resentment of Maximian was no longer to be dreaded; and the moderate Constantius, though he might despise the dangers, was humanely apprehensive of the calamities, of civil war. The two persons whom Galerius promoted to the rank of Cæsar were much better suited to serve the views of his ambition; and their principal recommendation seems to have consisted in the want of merit or personal consequence. The first of these was Daza, or, as he was afterwards called, Maximin, whose mother was the sister of Galerius.^a The unexperienced youth still betrayed by his manners and language his rustic education, when, to his own astonishment, as well as that of the world, he was invested by Diocletian with the purple, exalted to the dignity of Cæsar, and intrusted with the sovereign command of Egypt and Syria.⁵ At the same time Severus, a faithful servant, addicted to pleasure, but not incapable of business, was sent to Milan to receive from the reluctant hands of Maximian the Cæsarian ornaments and the possession of Italy and Africa.⁶ According to the forms of the constitution, Severus acknowledged the supremacy of the western emperor; but he was absolutely devoted to the commands of his benefactor Galerius, who, reserving to himself the intermediate countries from the confines of Italy to those of Syria, firmly established his power over three-fourths of the monarchy. In the full confidence that the approaching death

⁵ Sublatus nuper a pecoribus et silvis (says Lactantius de M. P. c. 19) statim Scutarius, continuo Protector, mox Tribunus, postridie Cæsar, accepit Orientem. Aurelius Victor is too liberal in giving him the whole portion of Diocletian.

⁶ His diligence and fidelity are acknowledged even by Lactantius, de M. P. c. 18.

^a The following table shows the connexion between the above-mentioned persons:—



of Constantius would leave him sole master of the Roman world, we are assured that he had arranged in his mind a long succession of future princes, and that he meditated his own retreat from public life after he should have accomplished a glorious reign of about twenty years.⁷

But, within less than eighteen months, two unexpected revolutions overturned the ambitious schemes of Galerius. The hopes of uniting the western provinces to his empire were disappointed by the elevation of Constantine; whilst Italy and Africa were lost by the successful revolt of Maxentius.

Ambition of Galerius disappointed by two revolutions.

I. The fame of Constantine has rendered posterity attentive to the most minute circumstances of his life and actions. The place of his birth, as well as the condition of his mother Helena, have been the subject not only of literary but of national disputes. Notwithstanding the recent tradition which assigns for her father a British king,⁸ we are obliged to confess that Helena was the daughter of an innkeeper; but at the same time we may defend the legality of her marriage against those who have represented her as the concubine of Constantius.⁹ The great Constantine was most probably born at Naissus, in Dacia;¹⁰ and it is not

Birth, education, and escape of Constantine. A.D. 274.

⁷ These schemes, however, rest only on the very doubtful authority of Lactantius de M. P. c. 20.

⁸ This tradition, unknown to the contemporaries of Constantine, was invented in the darkness of monasteries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth and the writers of the xiith century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous History of England compiled by Mr. Carte (vol. i. p. 147). He transports, however, the kingdom of Coil, the imaginary father of Helena, from Essex to the wall of Antoninus.

⁹ Eutropius (x. 2) expresses, in a few words, the real truth, and the occasion of the error, "*ex obscuriori matrimonio ejus filius*." Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 8] p. 78) eagerly seized the most unfavourable report, and is followed by Orosius (vii. 25), whose authority is oddly enough overlooked by the indefatigable but partial Tillemont. By insisting on the divorce of Helena, Diocletian acknowledged her marriage.

¹⁰ There are three opinions with regard to the place of Constantine's birth. 1. Our English antiquarians were used to dwell with rapture on the words of his panegyrist, "*Britannias illic oriundo nobiles fecisti*." But this celebrated passage may be referred with as much propriety to the accession as to the nativity of Constantine. 2. Some of the modern Greeks have ascribed the honour of his birth to Drepanum, a town on the gulf of Nicomedia (Cellarius, tom. ii. p. 174), which Constantine dignified with the name of Helenopolis, and Justinian adorned with many splendid buildings (Procop. de Edificiis, v. 2). It is indeed probable enough that Helena's father-kept an inn at Drepanum, and that Constantius might lodge there when he returned from a Persian embassy in the reign of Aurelian. But in the wandering life of a soldier, the place of his marriage, and the places where his children are born, have very little connection with each other. 3. The claim of Naissus is supported by the anonymous writer, published at the end of Ammianus, p. 710 [vol. ii. p. 295, ed. Bip.], and who in general copied very good materials: and it is confirmed by Julius Firmicus (de Astrologia, l. i. c. 4), who flourished under the reign of Constantine himself. Some objections have been raised against the integrity of the text, and the application of the passage, of Firmicus; but the former is established by the best MSS., and the latter is very ably defended by Lipsius de Magnitudine Romana, l. iv. c. 11, et Supplement."

^a Other authorities place the birth Them. ii. 9, p. 26; quoted by Clinton of Constantine at Naissus. See Steph. Fast. Rom. vol. ii. p. 80.—S. Byz. s. v. *Ναῖσος*; Constantin. Porphy.

surprising that, in a family and province distinguished only by the profession of arms, the youth should discover very little inclination to improve his mind by the acquisition of knowledge.¹¹ He was

A.D. 292.

about eighteen years of age when his father was promoted to the rank of Cæsar; but that fortunate event was attended with his mother's divorce; and the splendour of an Imperial alliance reduced the son of Helena to a state of disgrace and humiliation. Instead of following Constantius in the West, he remained in the service of Diocletian, signalised his valour in the wars of Egypt and Persia, and gradually rose to the honourable station of a tribune of the first order. The figure of Constantine was tall and majestic; he was dexterous in all his exercises, intrepid in war, affable in peace; in his whole conduct the active spirit of youth was tempered by habitual prudence; and while his mind was engrossed by ambition, he appeared cold and insensible to the allurements of pleasure. The favour of the people and soldiers, who had named him as a worthy candidate for the rank of Cæsar, served only to exasperate the jealousy of Galerius; and though prudence might restrain him from exercising any open violence, an absolute monarch is seldom at a loss how to execute a sure and secret revenge.¹² Every hour increased the danger of Constantine, and the anxiety of his father, who, by repeated letters, expressed the warmest desire of embracing his son. For some time the policy of Galerius supplied him with delays and excuses, but it was impossible long to refuse so natural a request of his associate without maintaining his refusal by arms. The permission of the journey was reluctantly granted, and, whatever precautions the emperor might have taken to intercept a return, the consequences of which he with so much reason apprehended, they were effectually disappointed by the incredible diligence of Constantine.¹³ Leaving the palace of Nicomedia in the night, he travelled post through Bithynia, Thrace, Dacia, Pannonia, Italy, and Gaul, and, amidst the joyful acclamations of the people, reached the port of Boulogne in the very moment when his father was preparing to embark for Britain.¹⁴

¹¹ *Literis minus instructus.* Anonym. ad Ammian. p. 710.

¹² Galerius, or perhaps his own courage, exposed him to single combat with a Sarmatian (Anonym. p. 710), and with a monstrous lion. See Praxagoras apud Photium, p. 63. Praxagoras, an Athenian philosopher, had written a life of Constantine in two books, which are now lost. He was a contemporary.

¹³ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 8] p. 78, 79. Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. The former tells a very foolish story, that Constantine caused all the post-horses which he had used to be hamstrung. Such a bloody execution, without preventing a pursuit, would have scattered suspicions, and might have stopped his journey.^a

¹⁴ Anonym. p. 710. Panegy. Veter. vii. 7. But Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 9] p. 79,

^a Zosimus is not the only writer who tells this story. Aurelius Victor (de Cæsar. 40; Epit. 41) says the same thing—G. —as also the Anonymus Valesii.—M.

Manso (Leben Constantins, p. 18) observes that the story has been exaggerated; he took this precaution during the first stage of his journey.—M.

The British expedition, and an easy victory over the barbarians of Caledonia, were the last exploits of the reign of Constantius. He ended his life in the Imperial palace of York, fifteen months after he had received the title of Augustus, and almost fourteen years and a half after he had been promoted to the rank of Cæsar. His death was immediately succeeded by the elevation of Constantine. The ideas of inheritance and succession are so very familiar, that the generality of mankind consider them as founded not only in reason but in nature itself. Our imagination readily transfers the same principles from private property to public dominion: and whenever a virtuous father leaves behind him a son whose merit seems to justify the esteem, or even the hopes, of the people, the joint influence of prejudice and of affection operates with irresistible weight. The flower of the western armies had followed Constantius into Britain, and the national troops were reinforced by a numerous body of Alemanni, who obeyed the orders of Crocus, one of their hereditary chieftains.¹⁵ The opinion of their own importance, and the assurance that Britain, Gaul, and Spain would acquiesce in their nomination, were diligently inculcated to the legions by the adherents of Constantine. The soldiers were asked whether they could hesitate a moment between the honour of placing at their head the worthy son of their beloved emperor and the ignominy of tamely expecting the arrival of some obscure stranger, on whom it might please the sovereign of Asia to bestow the armies and provinces of the West? It was insinuated to them that gratitude and liberality held a distinguished place among the virtues of Constantine; nor did that artful prince show himself to the troops till they were prepared to salute him with the names of Augustus and Emperor. The throne was the object of his desires; and had he been less actuated by ambition, it was his only means of safety. He was well acquainted with the character and sentiments of Galerius, and sufficiently apprised that, if he wished to live, he must determine to reign. The decent, and even obstinate, resistance which he chose to

Death of
Constantius,
and elevation
of
Constantine.
A.D. 306.
July 25.

Eusebius de Vit. Constant. l. i. c. 21, and Lactantius de M. P. c. 24, suppose, with less accuracy, that he found his father on his death-bed.^a

¹⁵ Cunctis qui aderant annitentibus, sed præcipue Croco (*alii Eroco*) [Erich?] Alemannorum Rege, auxilii gratiâ Constantium comitato, imperium capit. Victor Junior, c. 41. This is perhaps the first instance of a barbarian king who assisted the Roman arms with an independent body of his own subjects. The practice grew familiar, and at last became fatal.^b

^a Aurelius Victor (de Cesar. 40; Epit. 41) agrees with Zosimus, Eusebius, and Lactantius.—S.

^b The name Erocos may perhaps be a corruption of Ertocus, a Latinization of

the old Saxon Heritogo (A.-S. Heretoga, Germ. Herzog), dux. See Lappenberg's Hist. of England, translated by Thorpe, vol. i. p. 47.—S.

affect¹⁶ was contrived to justify his usurpation ; nor did he yield to the acclamations of the army till he had provided the proper materials for a letter, which he immediately despatched to the emperor of the East. Constantine informed him of the melancholy event of his father's death, modestly asserted his natural claim to the succession, and respectfully lamented that the affectionate violence of his troops had not permitted him to solicit the Imperial purple in the regular and constitutional manner. The first emotions of Galerius were those of surprise, disappointment, and rage ; and, as he could seldom restrain his passions, he loudly threatened that he would commit to the flames both the letter and the messenger. But his resentment

He is acknowledged by Galerius, who gives him only the title of Cæsar, and that of Augustus to Severus.

insensibly subsided ; and when he recollected the doubtful chance of war, when he had weighed the character and strength of his adversary, he consented to embrace the honourable accommodation which the prudence of Constantine had left open to him. Without either condemning or ratifying the choice of the British army, Galerius accepted the son of his deceased colleague as the sovereign of the provinces beyond the Alps ; but he gave him only the title of Cæsar, and the fourth rank among the Roman princes, whilst he conferred the vacant place of Augustus on his favourite Severus. The apparent harmony of the empire was still preserved, and Constantine, who already possessed the substance, expected, without impatience, an opportunity of obtaining the honours of supreme power.¹⁷

The children of Constantius by his second marriage were six in number, three of either sex, and whose Imperial descent might have solicited a preference over the meaner extraction of the son of Helena. But Constantine was in the thirty-second year of his age, in the full vigour both of mind and body, at the time when the eldest of his brothers could not possibly be more than thirteen years old. His claim of superior merit had been allowed and ratified by the dying emperor.¹⁸ In his last moments Constantius bequeathed to his eldest son the care of the safety, as well as greatness, of the family ; conjuring him to assume both the authority and the sentiments of a father with regard to the children of Theodora. Their liberal education, advantageous marriages, the secure dignity of their lives, and the first honours of the

The brothers and sisters of Constantine.

¹⁶ His panegyrist Eumenius (vii. 8) ventures to affirm, in the presence of Constantine, that he put spurs to his horse, and tried, but in vain, to escape from the hands of his soldiers.

¹⁷ Lactantius de M. P. c. 25. Eumenius (vii. 8) gives a rhetorical turn to the whole transaction.

¹⁸ The choice of Constantine by his dying father, which is warranted by reason, and insinuated by Eumenius, seems to be confirmed by the most unexceptionable authority, the concurring evidence of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 24) and of Libanius (Oratio i.), of Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 21) and of Julian (Oratio i. [p. 7])

state with which they were invested, attest the fraternal affection of Constantine; and, as those princes possessed a mild and grateful disposition, they submitted without reluctance to the superiority of his genius and fortune.¹⁹ ^a

II. The ambitious spirit of Galerius was scarcely reconciled to the disappointment of his views upon the Gallic provinces before the unexpected loss of Italy wounded his pride as well as power in a still more sensible part. The long absence of the emperors had filled Rome with discontent and indignation; and the people gradually discovered that the preference given to Nicomedia and Milan was not to be ascribed to the particular inclination of Diocletian, but to the permanent form of government which he had instituted. It was in vain that, a few months after his abdication, his successors dedicated, under his name, those magnificent baths whose ruins still supply the ground as well as the materials for so many churches and convents.²⁰ The tranquillity of those elegant recesses of ease and luxury was disturbed by the impatient murmurs of the Romans, and a report was insensibly circulated that the sums expended in erecting those buildings would soon be required at their hands. About that time the avarice of Galerius, or perhaps the exigencies of the state, had induced him to make a very strict and rigorous inquisition into the property of his subjects for the purpose of a general taxation, both on their lands and on their persons. A very minute survey appears to have been taken of their real estates; and, wherever there was the slightest suspicion of concealment, torture was very freely employed to obtain a sincere declaration of their personal wealth.²¹ The privileges which had exalted Italy above the rank of the provinces were no longer regarded: and the officers of the revenue already began to number the Roman people, and to settle the proportion of the new taxes. Even when the spirit of freedom had been utterly extinguished, the tamest subjects have sometimes ventured to resist an unprecedented invasion of their property; but on this occasion the

Discontent
of the Ro-
mans at the
apprehension
of taxes.

¹⁹ Of the three sisters of Constantine, Constantia married the emperor Licinius, Anastasia the Caesar Bassianus, and Eutropia the consul Nepotianus. The three brothers were, Dalmatius, Julius Constantius, and Annibalianus, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

²⁰ See Gruter Inscript. p. 178. The six princes are all mentioned, Diocletian and Maximian as the senior Augusti, and fathers of the emperors. They jointly dedicate, for the use of *their own* Romans, this magnificent edifice. The architects have delineated the ruins of these *Thermæ*; and the antiquarians, particularly Donatus and Nardini, have ascertained the ground which they covered. One of the great rooms is now the Carthusian church; and even one of the porter's lodges is sufficient to form another church, which belongs to the Feuillans.

²¹ See Lactantius de M. P. c. 26, 31.

^a See genealogical table at the beginning of c. xviii.—S.

injury was aggravated by the insult, and the sense of private interest was quickened by that of national honour. The conquest of Macedonia, as we have already observed, had delivered the Roman people from the weight of personal taxes. Though they had experienced every form of despotism, they had now enjoyed that exemption near five hundred years; nor could they patiently brook the insolence of an Illyrian peasant, who, from his distant residence in Asia, presumed to number Rome among the tributary cities of his empire.^a The rising fury of the people was encouraged by the authority, or at least the connivance, of the senate; and the feeble remains of the Prætorian guards, who had reason to apprehend their own dissolution, embraced so honourable a pretence, and declared their readiness to draw their swords in the service of their oppressed country. It was the wish, and it soon became the hope, of every citizen that, after expelling from Italy their foreign tyrants, they should elect a prince who, by the place of his residence, and by his maxims of government, might once more deserve the title of Roman emperor. The name, as well as the situation of Maxentius, determined in his favour the popular enthusiasm.

Maxentius was the son of the emperor Maximian, and he had married the daughter of Galerius. His birth and alliance seemed to offer him the fairest promise of succeeding to the empire; but his vices and incapacity procured him the same exclusion from the dignity of Cæsar which Constantine had deserved by a dangerous superiority of merit. The policy of Galerius preferred such associates as would never disgrace the choice, nor dispute the commands, of their benefactor. An obscure stranger

Maxentius
declared
emperor
at Rome,
A.D. 306.
Oct. 28.

^a Notwithstanding the discontent of the people, the system of taxation which had prevailed in the provinces was now permanently established in Italy. This has been shown by Savigny, who quotes a remarkable passage of Aurelius Victor (de Cæsar. c. 39):—"Hinc denique parti Italix invectum tributorum ingens malum;" where "pars Italix" does not mean a part of Italy, but the land of Italy, for, even in classical writers, "pars" frequently signifies a land or country. The "tributa" were the land-tax and poll-tax, which were established in the provinces under the early emperors. See note, vol. i. p. 302, seq. Thus there was now one uniform system of taxation throughout the Roman empire, of which an account is given below, in c. xvii. It may, however, be observed here that exemption from taxation continued to be enjoyed by those towns in the provinces which possessed

the *jus Italicum*, and that this name continued to be employed, although no longer appropriate, since Italy had ceased to possess any special rights. The taxation of Italy did not arise from the avarice of the emperor, but was necessary in consequence of the division of the empire. So long as Italy and all the provinces were under one and the same government, the provinces alone might bear the expenses without any great hardship; but when Italy and Africa were formed into a separate kingdom, it was impossible that the whole burden of the government should be borne by Africa alone. It is true that this division did not long continue; but it was natural that Italy should never regain its exemption from taxation, more especially as it came to be regarded less and less as the ruling land. Savigny, *Römische Steuerverfassung*, in *Vermischte Schriften*, vol. ii. p. 108, seq.—S.

was therefore raised to the throne of Italy, and the son of the late emperor of the West was left to enjoy the luxury of a private fortune in a villa a few miles distant from the capital. The gloomy passions of his soul, shame, vexation, and rage, were inflamed by envy on the news of Constantine's success; but the hopes of Maxentius revived with the public discontent, and he was easily persuaded to unite his personal injury and pretensions with the cause of the Roman people. Two Prætorian tribunes and a commissary of provisions undertook the management of the conspiracy; and, as every order of men was actuated by the same spirit, the immediate event was neither doubtful nor difficult. The præfect of the city and a few magistrates, who maintained their fidelity to Severus, were massacred by the guards; and Maxentius, invested with the Imperial ornaments, was acknowledged, by the applauding senate and people, as the protector of the Roman freedom and dignity. It is uncertain whether Maximian was previously acquainted with the conspiracy; but as soon as the standard of rebellion was erected at Rome, the old emperor broke from the retirement where the authority of Diocletian had condemned him to pass a life of melancholy solitude, and concealed his returning ambition under the disguise of paternal tenderness. At the request of his son and of the senate he condescended to reassume the purple. His ancient dignity, his experience, and his fame in arms added strength as well as reputation to the party of Maxentius.²²

According to the advice, or rather the orders, of his colleague, the emperor Severus immediately hastened to Rome, in the full confidence that, by his unexpected celerity, he should easily suppress the tumult of an unwarlike populace, commanded by a licentious youth. But he found on his arrival the gates of the city shut against him, the walls filled with men and arms, an experienced general at the head of the rebels, and his own troops without spirit or affection. A large body of Moors deserted to the enemy, allured by the promise of a large donative; and, if it be true that they had been levied by Maximian in his African war, preferring the natural feelings of gratitude to the artificial ties of allegiance. Anulinus, the Prætorian præfect, declared himself in favour of Maxentius, and drew after him the most considerable part of the troops accustomed to obey his commands. Rome, according to the expression of an orator, recalled her armies; and the unfortunate Severus, destitute of force and of counsel, retired, or rather fled, with precipitation to

²² The sixth Panegyric represents the conduct of Maximian in the most favourable light; and the ambiguous expression of Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 40], "retractante diu," may signify either that he contrived, or that he opposed, the conspiracy. See Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 9] p. 79, and Lactantius de M. P. c. 26.

Ravenna. Here he might for some time have been safe. The fortifications of Ravenna were able to resist the attempts, and the morasses that surrounded the town were sufficient to prevent the approach, of the Italian army. The sea, which Severus commanded with a powerful fleet, secured him an inexhaustible supply of provisions, and gave a free entrance to the legions which, on the return of spring, would advance to his assistance from Illyricum and the East. Maximian, who conducted the siege in person, was soon convinced that he might waste his time and his army in the fruitless enterprise, and that he had nothing to hope either from force or famine. With an art more suitable to the character of Diocletian than to his own, he directed his attack not so much against the walls of Ravenna as against the mind of Severus. The treachery which he had experienced disposed that unhappy prince to distrust the most sincere of his friends and adherents. The emissaries of Maximian easily persuaded his credulity that a conspiracy was formed to betray the town, and prevailed upon his fears not to expose himself to the discretion of an irritated conqueror, but to accept the faith of an honourable capitulation. He was at first received with humanity and treated with respect. Maximian conducted the captive emperor to Rome, and gave him the most solemn assurances that he had secured his life by the resignation of the purple. But Severus could obtain only an easy death and an Imperial funeral. When the sentence was signified to him, the manner of executing it was left to his own choice; he preferred the favourite mode of the ancients, that of opening his veins; and, as soon as he expired, his body was carried to the sepulchre which had been constructed for the family of Gallienus.²³

A. D. 307.
February.

Though the characters of Constantine and Maxentius had very little affinity with each other, their situation and interest were the same, and prudence seemed to require that they should unite their forces against the common enemy. Notwithstanding the superiority of his age and dignity, the indefatigable Maximian passed the Alps, and, courting a personal interview with the sovereign of Gaul, carried with him his daughter Fausta as the pledge of the new alliance. The marriage was celebrated at Arles with every circumstance of magnificence; and the ancient colleague of Diocletian, who again

Maximian
gives his
daughter
Fausta, and
the title of
Augustus, to
Constantine.
A. D. 307.
March 31.

²³ The circumstances of this war, and the death of Severus, are very doubtfully and variously told in our ancient fragments (see Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. part i. p. 555). I have endeavoured to extract from them a consistent and probable narration."

^a Manso justly observes that two totally different narratives might be formed, almost upon equal authority. Beylage, iv.--M.

asserted his claim to the Western empire, conferred on his son-in-law and ally the title of Augustus. By consenting to receive that honour from Maximian, Constantine seemed to embrace the cause of Rome and of the senate; but his professions were ambiguous, and his assistance slow and ineffectual. He considered with attention the approaching contest between the masters of Italy and the emperor of the East, and was prepared to consult his own safety or ambition in the event of the war.²⁴

The importance of the occasion called for the presence and abilities of Galerius. At the head of a powerful army collected from Illyricum and the East, he entered Italy, resolved to Galerius invades Italy. revenge the death of Severus and to chastise the rebellious Romans; or, as he expressed his intentions, in the furious language of a barbarian, to extirpate the senate, and to destroy the people by the sword. But the skill of Maximian had concerted a prudent system of defence. The invader found every place hostile, fortified, and inaccessible; and though he forced his way as far as Narni, within sixty miles of Rome, his dominion in Italy was confined to the narrow limits of his camp. Sensible of the increasing difficulties of his enterprise, the haughty Galerius made the first advances towards a reconciliation, and despatched two of his most considerable officers to tempt the Roman princes by the offer of a conference, and the declaration of his paternal regard for Maxentius, who might obtain much more from his liberality than he could hope from the doubtful chance of war.²⁵ The offers of Galerius were rejected with firmness, his perfidious friendship refused with contempt, and it was not long before he discovered that, unless he provided for his safety by a timely retreat, he had some reason to apprehend the fate of Severus. The wealth which the Romans defended against his rapacious tyranny, they freely contributed for his destruction. The name of Maximian, the popular arts of his son, the secret distribution of large sums, and the promise of still more liberal rewards, checked the ardour and corrupted the fidelity of the Illyrian legions; and when Galerius at length gave the signal of the retreat, it was with some difficulty that he could prevail on his veterans not to desert a banner which had so often conducted them to victory and honour. A contemporary writer assigns two other causes for the failure of the

²⁴ The sixth Panegyric was pronounced to celebrate the elevation of Constantine; but the prudent orator avoids the mention either of Galerius or of Maxentius. He introduces only one slight allusion to the actual troubles, and to the majesty of Rome."

²⁵ With regard to this negotiation, see the fragments of an anonymous historian, published by Valesius at the end of his edition of Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 711. These fragments have furnished us with several curious, and, as it should seem, authentic anecdotes.

² Compare Manso, Beylage, iv. p. 302. Gibbon's account is at least as probable as that of his critic.—M.

expedition; but they are both of such a nature that a cautious historian will scarcely venture to adopt them. We are told that Galerius, who had formed a very imperfect notion of the greatness of Rome by the cities of the East with which he was acquainted, found his forces inadequate to the siege of that immense capital. But the extent of a city serves only to render it more accessible to the enemy: Rome had long since been accustomed to submit on the approach of a conqueror; nor could the temporary enthusiasm of the people have long contended against the discipline and valour of the legions. We are likewise informed that the legions themselves were struck with horror and remorse, and that those pious sons of the republic refused to violate the sanctity of their venerable parent.²⁶ But when we recollect with how much ease, in the more ancient civil wars, the zeal of party and the habits of military obedience had converted the native citizens of Rome into her most implacable enemies, we shall be inclined to distrust this extreme delicacy of strangers and barbarians who had never beheld Italy till they entered it in a hostile manner. Had they not been restrained by motives of a more interested nature, they would probably have answered Galerius in the words of Cæsar's veterans: "If our general wishes to lead us to the banks of the Tiber, we are prepared to trace out his camp. Whatsoever walls he has determined to level with the ground, our hands are ready to work the engines: nor shall we hesitate, should the name of the devoted city be Rome itself." These are indeed the expressions of a poet; but of a poet who has been distinguished, and even censured, for his strict adherence to the truth of history.²⁷

The legions of Galerius exhibited a very melancholy proof of their disposition by the ravages which they committed in their retreat. They murdered, they ravished, they plundered, they drove away the flocks and herds of the Italians; they burnt the villages through which they passed, and they endeavoured to destroy the country which it had not been in their power to subdue. During the whole march Maxentius hung on their rear, but he very prudently declined a general engagement with those brave and desperate veterans. His father had undertaken a second journey into Gaul, with the hope of persuading Constantine, who had assembled an army on the frontier, to join the pursuit, and to complete the

²⁶ Lactantius de M. P. c. 27. The former of these reasons is probably taken from Virgil's Shepherd: "Illam * * * ego huic nostræ similem, Melibœe, putavi, &c." Lactantius delights in these poetical allusions.

²⁷

Castra super Tusci si ponere Tybridis undas (*jubeas*)
Hesperios audax veniam metator in agros.
Tu quoscunque voles in planum effundere muros,
His aries actus disperget saxa lacertis;
Illa licet penitus tolli quam jusseris urbem
Roma sit.

victory. But the actions of Constantine were guided by reason, and not by resentment. He persisted in the wise resolution of maintaining a balance of power in the divided empire, and he no longer hated Galerius when that aspiring prince had ceased to be an object of terror.²⁸

The mind of Galerius was the most susceptible of the sterner passions, but it was not, however, incapable of a sincere and lasting friendship. Licinius, whose manners as well as character were not unlike his own, seems to have engaged both his affection and esteem. Their intimacy had commenced in the happier period, perhaps, of their youth and obscurity. It had been cemented by the freedom and dangers of a military life; they had advanced almost by equal steps through the successive honours of the service; and as soon as Galerius was invested with the Imperial dignity, he seems to have conceived the design of raising his companion to the same rank with himself. During the short period of his prosperity, he considered the rank of Cæsar as unworthy of the age and merit of Licinius, and rather chose to reserve for him the place of Constantius, and the empire of the West. While the emperor was employed in the Italian war, he intrusted his friend with the defence of the Danube; and immediately after his return from that unfortunate expedition he invested Licinius with the vacant purple of Severus, resigning to his immediate command the provinces of Illyricum.²⁹ The news of his promotion was no sooner carried into the East, than Maximin, who governed, or rather oppressed, the countries of Egypt and Syria, betrayed his envy and discontent, disdained the inferior name of Cæsar, and, notwithstanding the prayers as well as arguments of Galerius, exacted, almost by violence, the equal title of Augustus.³⁰ For the first, and indeed for the last time, the Roman world was administered by six emperors. In the West, Constantine and Maxentius affected to reverence their father Maximian. In the East, Licinius and Maximin honoured with more real consideration their benefactor Galerius. The opposition of interest, and the memory of

Elevation of
Licinius to
the rank of
Augustus,
A.D. 307,
Nov. 11;

and of
Maximin.

Six em-
perors,
A.D. 308.

²⁸ Lactantius de M. P. c. 27. Zosim. l. ii. [c. 10] p. 82. The latter insinuates that Constantine, in his interview with Maximian, had promised to declare war against Galerius.

²⁹ M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. part i. p. 559) has proved that Licinius, without passing through the intermediate rank of Cæsar, was declared Augustus, the 11th of November. A.D. 307, after the return of Galerius from Italy.

³⁰ Lactantius de M. P. c. 32. When Galerius declared Licinius Augustus with himself, he tried to satisfy his younger associates, by inventing for Constantine and Maximin (not Maxentius, see Baluze, p. 81) the new title of sons of the Augusti. But when Maximin acquainted him that he had been saluted Augustus by the army, Galerius was obliged to acknowledge him, as well as Constantine, as equal associates in the Imperial dignity.

a recent war, divided the empire into two great hostile powers; but their mutual fears produced an apparent tranquillity, and even a feigned reconciliation, till the death of the elder princes, of Maximian, and more particularly of Galerius, gave a new direction to the views and passions of their surviving associates.

When Maximian had reluctantly abdicated the empire, the vernal orators of the times applauded his philosophic moderation. Misfortunes of Maximian. When his ambition excited, or at least encouraged, a civil war, they returned thanks to his generous patriotism, and gently censured that love of ease and retirement which had withdrawn him from the public service.³¹ But it was impossible that minds like those of Maximian and his son could long possess in harmony an undivided power. Maxentius considered himself as the legal sovereign of Italy, elected by the Roman senate and people; nor would he endure the control of his father, who arrogantly declared that by *his* name and abilities the rash youth had been established on the throne. The cause was solemnly pleaded before the Prætorian guards; and those troops, who dreaded the severity of the old emperor, espoused the party of Maxentius.³² The life and freedom of Maximian were, however, respected, and he retired from Italy into Illyricum, affecting to lament his past conduct, and secretly contriving new mischiefs. But Galerius, who was well acquainted with his character, soon obliged him to leave his dominions, and the last refuge of the disappointed Maximian was the court of his son-in-law Constantine.³³ He was received with respect by that artful prince, and with the appearance of filial tenderness by the empress Fausta. That he might remove every suspicion, he resigned the Imperial purple a second time,³⁴ professing himself at length convinced of the vanity of greatness and ambition. Had he persevered in this resolution, he might have ended his life with less dignity, indeed, than in his first retirement, yet, however, with comfort and reputation. But the near prospect of a throne brought back to his remembrance the state from whence he was fallen, and he resolved, by a desperate effort, either to reign or to perish. An incursion of the Franks had summoned Constantine, with a part of his army, to the banks

A D. 309.

³¹ See Panegy. Vet. vi. [v.] 9. Audi doloris nostri liberam vocem, &c. The whole passage is imagined with artful flattery, and expressed with an easy flow of eloquence.

³² Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. Zosim. l. ii. [c. 11] p. 82. A report was spread, that Maxentius was the son of some obscure Syrian, and had been substituted by the wife of Maximian as her own child. See Aurelius Victor [Epit. 40], Anonym. Valerian. [§ 12], and Panegy. Vet. ix. 3, 4.

³³ Ab urbe pulsum, ab Italia fugatum, ab Illyrico repudiatum, tuis provinciis, tuis copiis, tuo palatio receptisti. Eumen. in Panegy. Vet. vii. [vi.] 14.

³⁴ Lactantius de M. P. c. 29. Yet after the resignation of the purple, Constantine still continued to Maximian the pomp and honours of the Imperial dignity; and on all public occasions gave the right-hand place to his father-in-law. Panegy. Vet. viii. 15.

of the Rhine; the remainder of the troops were stationed in the southern provinces of Gaul, which lay exposed to the enterprises of the Italian emperor, and a considerable treasure was deposited in the city of Arles. Maximian either craftily invented, or hastily credited, a vain report of the death of Constantine. Without hesitation he ascended the throne, seized the treasure, and, scattering it with his accustomed profusion among the soldiers, endeavoured to awake in their minds the memory of his ancient dignity and exploits. Before he could establish his authority, or finish the negotiation which he appears to have entered into with his son Maxentius, the celerity of Constantine defeated all his hopes. On the first news of his perfidy and ingratitude, that prince returned by rapid marches from the Rhine to the Saone, embarked on the last-mentioned river at Châlons, and, at Lyons trusting himself to the rapidity of the Rhone, arrived at the gates of Arles with a military force which it was impossible for Maximian to resist, and which scarcely permitted him to take refuge in the neighbouring city of Marseilles. The narrow neck of land which joined that place to the continent was fortified against the besiegers, whilst the sea was open, either for the escape of Maximian, or for the succours of Maxentius, if the latter should choose to disguise his invasion of Gaul under the honourable pretence of defending a distressed, or, as he might allege, an injured father. Apprehensive of the fatal consequences of delay, Constantine gave orders for an immediate assault; but the scaling-ladders were found too short for the height of the walls, and Marseilles might have sustained as long a siege as it formerly did against the arms of Cæsar, if the garrison, conscious either of their fault or of their danger, had not purchased their pardon by delivering up the city and the person of Maximian. A secret but irrevocable sentence of death was pronounced against the usurper; he obtained only the same favour which he had indulged to Severus, and it was published to the world that, oppressed by the remorse of his repeated crimes, he strangled himself with his own hands. After he had lost the assistance, and disdained the moderate counsels, of Diocletian, the second period of his active life was a series of public calamities and personal mortifications, which were terminated, in about three years, by an ignominious death. He deserved his fate; but we should find more reason to applaud the humanity of Constantine, if he had spared an old man, the benefactor of his father, and the father of his wife. During the whole of this melancholy transaction, it appears that Fausta sacrificed the sentiments of nature to her conjugal duties.³⁵

³⁵ Zosim. l. ii. [c. 11] p. 82. Eumenius in Panegy. Vet. vii. 16-21. The latter of these has undoubtedly represented the whole affair in the most favourable light

The last years of Galerius were less shameful and unfortunate, and though he had filled with more glory the subordinate station of Cæsar than the superior rank of Augustus, he preserved, till the moment of his death, the first place among the princes of the Roman world. He survived his retreat from Italy about four years; and, wisely relinquishing his views of universal empire, he devoted the remainder of his life to the enjoyment of pleasure and to the execution of some works of public utility, among which we may distinguish the discharging into the Danube the superfluous waters of the lake Pelso, and the cutting down the immense forests that encompassed it: an operation worthy of a monarch, since it gave an extensive country to the agriculture of his Pannonian subjects.³⁶ His death was occasioned by a very painful and lingering disorder. His body, swelled by an intemperate course of life to an unwieldy corpulence, was covered with ulcers, and devoured by innumerable swarms of those insects who have given their name to a most loathsome disease;³⁷ but as Galerius had offended a very zealous and powerful party among his subjects, his sufferings, instead of exciting their compassion, have been celebrated as the visible effects of divine justice.³⁸ He had no sooner expired in his palace of Nicomedia, than the two emperors, who were indebted for their purple to his favour, began to collect their forces, with the intention either of disputing or of dividing the dominions which he had left without a master. They were persuaded, however, to desist from the former design, and to agree in the latter. The provinces of Asia fell to the share of Maximin, and those of Europe augmented the portion of Licinius. The Hellespont and the Thracian Bosphorus formed their mutual boundary, and the banks of those narrow seas, which flowed in the midst of the Roman world, were covered with soldiers, with arms, and with fortifications. The deaths of Maximian and of Galerius reduced

Death of
Galerius.
A.D. 311.
May.

His domi-
nion shared
between
Maximin and
Licinius.

for his sovereign. Yet even from this partial narrative we may conclude that the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian, as they are described by Lactantius (de M. P. c. 29, 30), and copied by the moderns, are destitute of any historical foundation.

³⁶ Aurelius Victor, c. 40. But that lake was situated on the upper Pannonia, near the borders of Noricum; and the province of Valeria (a name which the wife of Galerius gave to the drained country) undoubtedly lay between the Drave and the Danube (Sextus Rufus, c. 8). I should therefore suspect that Victor has confounded the lake Pelso with the Volocean marshes, or, as they are now called, the lake Sabaton. It is placed in the heart of Valeria, and its present extent is not less than twelve Hungarian miles (about seventy English) in length, and two in breadth. See Severini Pannonia, l. i. c. 9.

³⁷ Lactantius (de M. P. c. 33) and Eusebius (l. viii. c. 16) describe the symptoms and progress of his disorder with singular accuracy and apparent pleasure.

³⁸ If any (like the late Dr. Jortin, Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 307-356) still delight in recording the wonderful deaths of the persecutors, I would recommend to their perusal an admirable passage of Grotius (Hist. l. vii. p. 332) concerning the last illness of Philip II. of Spain.

the number of emperors to four. The sense of their true interest soon connected Licinius and Constantine; a secret alliance was concluded between Maximin and Maxentius, and their unhappy subjects expected with terror the bloody consequences of their inevitable dissensions, which were no longer restrained by the fear or the respect which they had entertained for Galerius.³⁹

Among so many crimes and misfortunes, occasioned by the passions of the Roman princes, there is some pleasure in discovering a single action which may be ascribed to their virtue. In the sixth year of his reign Constantine visited the city of Autun, and generously remitted the arrears of tribute, reducing at the same time the proportion of their assessment from twenty-five to eighteen thousand heads, subject to the real and personal capitation.^{40 a} Yet even this indulgence affords the most unquestionable proof of the public misery. This tax was so extremely oppressive, either in itself or in the mode of collecting it, that, whilst the revenue was increased by extortion, it was diminished by despair: a considerable part of the territory of Autun was left uncultivated; and great numbers of the provincials rather chose to live as exiles and outlaws than to support the weight of civil society. It is but too probable that the bountiful emperor relieved, by a partial act of liberality, one among the many evils which he had caused by his general maxims of administration. But even those maxims were less the effect of choice than of necessity. And if we except the death of Maximian, the reign of Constantine in Gaul seems to have been the most innocent and even virtuous period of his life. The provinces were protected by his presence from the inroads of the barbarians, who either dreaded or experienced his active valour. After a signal victory over the Franks and Alemanni, several of their princes were exposed by his order to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Treves, and the people seem to have enjoyed the spectacle, without discovering, in such a treatment of royal captives, anything that was repugnant to the laws of nations or of humanity.^{41 b}

The virtues of Constantine were rendered more illustrious by the

³⁹ See Eusebius, l. ix. 6, 10. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. Zosimus is less exact, and evidently confounds Maximian with Maximin.

⁴⁰ See the viiith Panegyric, in which Eumenius displays, in the presence of Constantine, the misery and the gratitude of the city of Autun.

⁴¹ Eutropius, x. 2. Panegyric. Veter. vii. 10, 11, 12. A great number of the French youth were likewise exposed to the same cruel and ignominious death.

^a On this statement, see Editor's note on c. xvii. note 185.—S

^b Yet the panegyric assumes something of an apologetic tone. Te vero, Constantine,

quantumlibet oderint hostes, dum perhorrescant. Hæc est enim vera virtus, ut non ament et quiescant. The orator appeals to the ancient usage of the republic.—M.

vices of Maxentius. Whilst the Gallic provinces enjoyed as much happiness as the condition of the times was capable of receiving, Italy and Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant as contemptible as he was odious. The zeal of flattery and faction has indeed too frequently sacrificed the reputation of the vanquished to the glory of their successful rivals; but even those writers who have revealed, with the most freedom and pleasure, the faults of Constantine, unanimously confess that Maxentius was cruel, rapacious, and profligate.⁴² He had the good fortune to suppress a slight rebellion in Africa. The governor and a few adherents had been guilty; the province suffered for their crime. The flourishing cities of Cirtha and Carthage, and the whole extent of that fertile country, were wasted by fire and sword. The abuse of victory was followed by the abuse of law and justice. A formidable army of sycophants and delators invaded Africa; the rich and the noble were easily convicted of a connection with the rebels; and those among them who experienced the emperor's clemency were only punished by the confiscation of their estates.⁴³ So signal a victory was celebrated by a magnificent triumph, and Maxentius exposed to the eyes of the people the spoils and captives of a Roman province. The state of the capital was no less deserving of compassion than that of Africa. The wealth of Rome supplied an inexhaustible fund for his vain and prodigal expenses, and the ministers of his revenue were skilled in the arts of rapine. It was under his reign that the method of exacting a *free gift* from the senators was first invented; and as the sum was insensibly increased, the pretences of levying it, a victory, a birth, a marriage, or an Imperial consulship, were proportionably multiplied.⁴⁴ Maxentius had imbibed the same implacable aversion to the senate which had characterised most of the former tyrants of Rome; nor was it possible for his ungrateful temper to forgive the generous fidelity which had raised him to the throne and supported him against all his enemies. The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealous suspicions, the dishonour of their wives and daughters heightened the gratification of his sensual passions.⁴⁵ It may be

⁴² Julian excludes Maxentius from the banquet of the Cæsars with abhorrence and contempt; and Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 14] p. 85) accuses him of every kind of cruelty and profligacy.

⁴³ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 14] p. 83-85. Aurelius Victor. [Cæsar. 40.]

⁴⁴ The passage of Aurelius Victor [l. c.] should be read in the following manner: *Primus instituto pessimo, munera specie, Patres Oratoresque pecuniam conferre prodigenti sibi cogeret.*

⁴⁵ Panegy. Vet. ix. 3. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. viii. 14, et in Vit. Constant. i. 33, 34. Rufinus, c. 17. The virtuous matron, who stabbed herself to escape the violence of Maxentius, was a Christian, wife to the præfect of the city, and her name was Sophronia. It still remains a question among the casuists, Whether, on such occasions, suicide is justifiable?

presumed that an Imperial lover was seldom reduced to sigh in vain ; but whenever persuasion proved ineffectual, he had recourse to violence ; and there remains *one* memorable example of a noble matron who preserved her chastity by a voluntary death. The soldiers were the only order of men whom he appeared to respect, or studied to please. He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder, and even to massacre, the defenceless people ;⁴⁶ and indulging them in the same licentiousness which their emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favourites the splendid villa, or the beautiful wife, of a senator. A prince of such a character, alike incapable of governing either in peace or in war, might purchase the support, but he could never obtain the esteem, of the army. Yet his pride was equal to his other vices. Whilst he passed his indolent life, either within the walls of his palace, or in the neighbouring gardens of Sallust, he was repeatedly heard to declare that *he alone* was emperor, and that the other princes were no more than his lieutenants, on whom he had devolved the defence of the frontier provinces, that he might enjoy without interruption the elegant luxury of the capital. Rome, which had so long regretted the absence, lamented, during the six years of his reign, the presence of her sovereign.⁴⁷

Though Constantine might view the conduct of Maxentius with abhorrence, and the situation of the Romans with compassion, we have no reason to presume that he would have taken up arms to punish the one, or to relieve the other. But the tyrant of Italy rashly ventured to provoke a formidable enemy whose ambition had been hitherto restrained by considerations of prudence rather than by principles of justice.⁴⁸ After the death of Maximian, his titles, according to the established custom, had been erased, and his statues thrown down with ignominy. His son, who had persecuted and deserted him when alive, affected to display the most pious regard for his memory, and gave orders that a similar treatment should be immediately inflicted on all the statues that had been erected in Italy and Africa to the honour of Constantine.

Civil war
between
Constantine
and
Maxentius.
A.D. 312.

⁴⁶ *Prætorianis cædem vulgi quondam annuerit*, is the vague expression of Aurelius Victor. [Cæsar. 40.] See more particular, though somewhat different, accounts of a tumult and massacre which happened at Rome, in Eusebius (l. viii. c. 14), and in Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 13] p. 84).

⁴⁷ See in the Panegyrics (ix. 14) a lively description of the indolence and vain pride of Maxentius. In another place [*ib.* c. 3] the orator observes that the riches which Rome had accumulated in a period of 1060 years were lavished by the tyrant on his mercenary bands; *redemptis ad civile latrocinium manibus ingesserat*.

⁴⁸ After the victory of Constantine it was universally allowed that the motive of delivering the republic from a detested tyrant would, at any time, have justified his expedition into Italy. Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 26. Panegy. Vet. ix. 2.

That wise prince, who sincerely wished to decline a war, with the difficulty and importance of which he was sufficiently acquainted, at first dissembled the insult, and sought for redress by the milder expedients of negotiation, till he was convinced that the hostile and ambitious designs of the Italian emperor made it necessary for him to arm in his own defence. Maxentius, who openly avowed his pretensions to the whole monarchy of the West, had already prepared a very considerable force to invade the Gallic provinces on the side of Rhætia; and though he could not expect any assistance from Licinius, he was flattered with the hope that the legions of Illyricum, allured by his presents and promises, would desert the standard of that prince, and unanimously declare themselves his soldiers and subjects.⁴⁹ Constantine no longer hesitated. He had deliberated with caution, he acted with vigour. He gave a private audience to the ambassadors who, in the name of the senate and people, conjured him to deliver Rome from a detested tyrant; and, without regarding the timid remonstrances of his council, he resolved to prevent the enemy, and to carry the war into the heart of Italy.⁵⁰

The enterprise was as full of danger as of glory; and the unsuccessful event of two former invasions was sufficient to inspire the most serious apprehensions. The veteran troops, who revered the name of Maximian, had embraced in both those wars the party of his son, and were now restrained by a sense of honour, as well as of interest, from entertaining an idea of a second desertion. Maxentius, who considered the Prætorian guards as the firmest defence of his throne, had increased them to their ancient establishment; and they composed, including the rest of the Italians who were enlisted into his service, a formidable body of fourscore thousand men. Forty thousand Moors and Carthaginians had been raised since the reduction of Africa. Even Sicily furnished its proportion of troops; and the armies of Maxentius amounted to one hundred and seventy thousand foot and eighteen thousand horse. The wealth of Italy supplied the expenses of the war; and the adjacent provinces were exhausted to form immense magazines of corn and every other kind of provisions.

The whole force of Constantine consisted of ninety thousand foot

⁴⁹ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 14] p. 84, 85. Nazarius in Panegyr. x. 7-13.

⁵⁰ See Panegyr. Vet. ix. [viii.] 2. *Omnibus fere tuis Comitibus et Ducibus non solum tacite mussantibus, sed etiam aperte timentibus; contra consilia hominum, contra Haruspicum monita, ipse per temet liberandæ urbis tempus venisse sentires.* The embassy of the Romans is mentioned only by Zonaras (l. xiii. [c. 1]), and by Cedrenus (in Compend. Hist. p. 270 [ed. Paris; vol. i. p. 474, ed. Bonn]); but those modern Greeks had the opportunity of consulting many writers which have since been lost, among which we may reckon the *Life of Constantine* by Praxagoras. Photius (p. 63) has made a short extract from that historical work.

and eight thousand horse; ⁵¹ and as the defence of the Rhine required an extraordinary attention during the absence of the emperor, it was not in his power to employ above half his troops in the Italian expedition, unless he sacrificed the public safety to his private quarrel. ⁵² At the head of about forty thousand soldiers, he marched to encounter an enemy whose numbers were at least four times superior to his own. But the armies of Rome, placed at a secure distance from danger, were enervated by indulgence and luxury. Habituated to the baths and theatres of Rome, they took the field with reluctance, and were chiefly composed of veterans who had almost forgotten, or of new levies who had never acquired, the use of arms and the practice of war. The hardy legions of Gaul had long defended the frontiers of the empire against the barbarians of the North; and in the performance of that laborious service their valour was exercised and their discipline confirmed. There appeared the same difference between the leaders as between the armies. Caprice or flattery had tempted Maxentius with the hopes of conquest; but these aspiring hopes soon gave way to the habits of pleasure and the consciousness of his inexperience. The intrepid mind of Constantine had been trained from his earliest youth to war, to action, and to military command.

When Hannibal marched from Gaul into Italy, he was obliged, first to discover, and then to open, a way over mountains, and through savage nations, that had never yielded a passage to a regular army. ⁵³ The Alps were then guarded by nature, they are now fortified by art. Citadels, constructed with no less skill than labour and expense, command every avenue into the plain, and on that side render Italy almost inaccessible to the enemies of the king of Sardinia. ⁵⁴ But in the course of the intermediate period, the

Constantine passes the Alps.

¹ Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 15] p. 86) has given us this curious account of the forces on both sides. He makes no mention of any naval armaments, though we are assured (Panegy. Vet. ix. 25) that the war was carried on by sea as well as by land; and that the fleet of Constantine took possession of Sardinia, Corsica, and the ports of Italy.

⁵² Panegy. Vet. ix. 3. It is not surprising that the orator should diminish the numbers with which his sovereign achieved the conquest of Italy; but it appears somewhat singular that he should esteem the tyrant's army at no more than 100,000 men.

⁵³ The three principal passages of the Alps between Gaul and Italy are those of Mount St. Bernard, Mount Cenis, and Mount Genevre. Tradition, and a resemblance of names (*Alpes Pennine*), had assigned the first of these for the march of Hannibal (see Simler de Alpibus). The Chevalier de Folard (Polyb. tom. iv.) and M. d'Anville have led him over Mount Genevre. But notwithstanding the authority of an experienced officer and a learned geographer, the pretensions of Mount Cenis are supported in a specious, not to say a convincing manner, by M. Grosley, *Observations sur l'Italie*, tom. i. p. 40, &c.^a

⁵⁴ La Brunette near Suse, Demont, Exiles, Fenestrelles, Coni, &c.

^a Most modern scholars have maintained that Hannibal crossed the Graian Alps, or the Little St. Bernard; but a recent writer has advocated with much ingenuity the

claims of Mont Cenis. See Ellis, *A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps*, 1853.—S.

generals who have attempted the passage have seldom experienced any difficulty or resistance. In the age of Constantine the peasants of the mountains were civilised and obedient subjects; the country was plentifully stocked with provisions, and the stupendous highways which the Romans had carried over the Alps opened several communications between Gaul and Italy.⁵⁵ Constantine preferred the road of the Cottian Alps, or, as it is now called, of Mount Cenis, and led his troops with such active diligence, that he descended into the plain of Piedmont before the court of Maxentius had received any certain intelligence of his departure from the banks of the Rhine. The city of Susa, however, which is situated at the foot of Mount Cenis, was surrounded with walls, and provided with a garrison sufficiently numerous to check the progress of an invader; but the impatience of Constantine's troops disdained the tedious forms of a siege. The same day that they appeared before Susa they applied fire to the gates and ladders to the walls; and mounting to the assault amidst a shower of stones and arrows, they entered the place sword in hand, and cut in pieces the greatest part of the garrison. The flames were extinguished by the care of Constantine, and the remains of Susa preserved from total destruction. About forty miles from thence a more severe contest awaited him. A numerous army

Battle of
Turin. of Italians was assembled, under the lieutenants of Maxentius, in the plains of Turin. Its principal strength consisted in a species of heavy cavalry, which the Romans, since the decline of their discipline, had borrowed from the nations of the East. The horses, as well as the men, were clothed in complete armour, the joints of which were artfully adapted to the motions of their bodies. The aspect of this cavalry was formidable, their weight almost irresistible; and as, on this occasion, their generals had drawn them up in a compact column or wedge, with a sharp point, and with spreading flanks, they flattered themselves that they should easily break and trample down the army of Constantine. They might, perhaps, have succeeded in their design, had not their experienced adversary embraced the same method of defence which in similar circumstances had been practised by Aurelian. The skilful evolutions of Constantine divided and baffled this massy column of cavalry. The troops of Maxentius fled in confusion towards Turin; and as the gates of the city were shut against them, very few escaped the sword of the victorious pursuers. By this important service Turin deserved to experience the clemency and even favour of the conqueror. He made his entry into the Imperial palace of Milan, and almost all the cities

⁵⁵ See Ammian. Marcellin. xv. 10. His description of the roads over the Alps is clear, lively, and accurate.

of Italy between the Alps and the Po not only acknowledged the power, but embraced with zeal the party, of Constantine.⁵⁶

From Milan to Rome, the Æmilian and Flaminian highways offered an easy march of about four hundred miles; but though Constantine was impatient to encounter the tyrant, Siege and battle of Verona. he prudently directed his operations against another army of Italians, who, by their strength and position, might either oppose his progress, or, in case of a misfortune, might intercept his retreat. Ruricius Pompeianus, a general distinguished by his valour and ability, had under his command the city of Verona, and all the troops that were stationed in the province of Venetia. As soon as he was informed that Constantine was advancing towards him, he detached a large body of cavalry, which was defeated in an engagement near Brescia, and pursued by the Gallic legions as far as the gates of Verona. The necessity, the importance, and the difficulties of the siege of Verona, immediately presented themselves to the sagacious mind of Constantine.⁵⁷ The city was accessible only by a narrow peninsula towards the west, as the other three sides were surrounded by the Adige, a rapid river, which covered the province of Venetia, from whence the besieged derived an inexhaustible supply of men and provisions. It was not without great difficulty, and after several fruitless attempts, that Constantine found means to pass the river at some distance above the city, and in a place where the torrent was less violent. He then encompassed Verona with strong lines, pushed his attacks with prudent vigour, and repelled a desperate sally of Pompeianus. That intrepid general, when he had used every means of defence that the strength of the place or that of the garrison could afford, secretly escaped from Verona, anxious not for his own but for the public safety. With indefatigable diligence he soon collected an army sufficient either to meet Constantine in the field, or to attack him if he obstinately remained within his lines. The emperor, attentive to the motions, and informed of the approach, of so formidable an enemy, left a part of his legions to continue the operations of the siege, whilst, at the head of those troops on whose valour and fidelity he more particularly depended, he advanced in person to engage the general of Maxentius. The army of Gaul was drawn up in two lines, according to the usual practice of war; but their

⁵⁶ Zosimus as well as Eusebius hasten from the passage of the Alps to the decisive action near Rome. We must apply to the two Panegyrics for the intermediate actions of Constantine.

⁵⁷ The Marquis Maffei has examined the siege and battle of Verona with that degree of attention and accuracy which was due to a memorable action that happened in his native country. The fortifications of that city, constructed by Gallienus, were less extensive than the modern walls, and the amphitheatre was not included within their circumference. See *Verona Illustrata*, part i. p. 142, 150.

experienced leader, perceiving that the numbers of the Italians far exceeded his own, suddenly changed his disposition, and, reducing the second, extended the front of his first line to a just proportion with that of the enemy. Such evolutions, which only veteran troops can execute without confusion in a moment of danger, commonly prove decisive: but as this engagement began towards the close of the day, and was contested with great obstinacy during the whole night, there was less room for the conduct of the generals than for the courage of the soldiers. The return of light displayed the victory of Constantine, and a field of carnage covered with many thousands of the vanquished Italians. Their general, Pompeianus, was found among the slain; Verona immediately surrendered at discretion, and the garrison was made prisoners of war.⁵⁸ When the officers of the victorious army congratulated their master on this important success, they ventured to add some respectful complaints, of such a nature, however, as the most jealous monarchs will listen to without displeasure. They represented to Constantine, that, not contented with performing all the duties of a commander, he had exposed his own person with an excess of valour which almost degenerated into rashness; and they conjured him for the future to pay more regard to the preservation of a life in which the safety of Rome and of the empire was involved.⁵⁹

While Constantine signalised his conduct and valour in the field, the sovereign of Italy appeared insensible of the calamities and danger of a civil war which raged in the heart of his dominions. Pleasure was still the only business of Maxentius. Concealing, or at least attempting to conceal, from the public knowledge the misfortunes of his arms,⁶⁰ he indulged himself in a vain confidence, which deferred the remedies of the approaching evil without deferring the evil itself.⁶¹ The rapid progress of Constantine⁶² was scarcely sufficient to awaken him from this fatal security; he flattered himself that his well-known liberality, and the majesty of the Roman name, which had already delivered him from two invasions, would dissipate with the same facility the rebellious army of Gaul. The officers of experience and ability who had served under the banners of Maximian were at length compelled to inform his effeminate son of the imminent

⁵⁸ They wanted chains for so great a multitude of captives; and the whole council was at a loss; but the sagacious conqueror imagined the happy expedient of converting into fetters the swords of the vanquished. Panegy. Vet. ix. 9.

⁵⁹ Panegy. Vet. ix. 10.

⁶⁰ Literas calamitatum suarum indices suppresserat. Panegy. Vet. ix. 15.

⁶¹ Remedia malorum potius quam mala differebat, is the fine censure which Tacitus passes on the supine indolence of Vitellius.

⁶² The Marquis Maffei has made it extremely probable that Constantine was still at Verona, the 1st of September, A.D. 312, and that the memorable era of the Indictions was dated from his conquest of the Cisalpine Gaul.

danger to which he was reduced; and, with a freedom that at once surprised and convinced him, to urge the necessity of preventing his ruin by a vigorous exertion of his remaining power. The resources of Maxentius, both of men and money, were still considerable. The Prætorian guards felt how strongly their own interest and safety were connected with his cause; and a third army was soon collected, more numerous than those which had been lost in the battles of Turin and Verona. It was far from the intention of the emperor to lead his troops in person. A stranger to the exercises of war, he trembled at the apprehension of so dangerous a contest; and, as fear is commonly superstitious, he listened with melancholy attention to the rumours of omens and presages which seemed to menace his life and empire. Shame at length supplied the place of courage, and forced him to take the field. He was unable to sustain the contempt of the Roman people. The circus resounded with their indignant clamours, and they tumultuously besieged the gates of the palace, reproaching the pusillanimity of their indolent sovereign, and celebrating the heroic spirit of Constantine.⁶³ Before Maxentius left Rome he consulted the Sibylline books. The guardians of these ancient oracles were as well versed in the arts of this world as they were ignorant of the secrets of fate; and they returned him a very prudent answer, which might adapt itself to the event, and secure their reputation, whatever should be the chance of arms.⁶⁴

The celerity of Constantine's march has been compared to the rapid conquest of Italy by the first of the Cæsars; nor is the flattering parallel repugnant to the truth of history, since no more than fifty-eight days elapsed between the surrender of Verona and the final decision of the war.

Victory of
Constantine
near Rome.
A.D. 312.
Oct. 28.

Constantine had always apprehended that the tyrant would consult the dictates of fear, and perhaps of prudence; and that, instead of risking his last hopes in a general engagement, he would shut himself up within the walls of Rome. His ample magazines secured him against the danger of famine; and as the situation of Constantine admitted not of delay, he might have been reduced to the sad necessity of destroying with fire and sword the Imperial city, the noblest reward of his victory, and the deliverance of which had been the motive, or rather indeed the pretence, of the civil war.⁶⁵ It was with

⁶³ See Panegy. Vet. xi. 16 [ix. 14?]. Lactantius de M. P. c. 44.

⁶⁴ Illo die hostem Romanorum esse periturum. [Lact. l. c.] The vanquished prince became of course the enemy of Rome.

⁶⁵ See Panegy. Vet. ix. 16, x. 27. The former of these orators magnifies the hoards of corn which Maxentius had collected from Africa and the islands. And yet, if there is any truth in the scarcity mentioned by Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 36), the Imperial granaries must have been open only to the soldiers.

equa. surprise and pleasure that, on his arrival at a place called Saxa Rubra, about nine miles from Rome,⁶⁶ he discovered the army of Maxentius prepared to give him battle.⁶⁷ Their long front filled a very spacious plain, and their deep array reached to the banks of the Tiber, which covered their rear, and forbade their retreat. We are informed, and we may believe, that Constantine disposed his troops with consummate skill, and that he chose for himself the post of honour and danger. Distinguished by the splendour of his arms, he charged in person the cavalry of his rival; and his irresistible attack determined the fortune of the day. The cavalry of Maxentius was principally composed either of unwieldy cuirassiers or of light Moors and Numidians. They yielded to the vigour of the Gallic horse, which possessed more activity than the one, more firmness than the other. The defeat of the two wings left the infantry without any protection on its flanks, and the undisciplined Italians fled without reluctance from the standard of a tyrant whom they had always hated, and whom they no longer feared. The Prætorians, conscious that their offences were beyond the reach of mercy, were animated by revenge and despair. Notwithstanding their repeated efforts, those brave veterans were unable to recover the victory: they obtained, however, an honourable death; and it was observed that their bodies covered the same ground which had been occupied by their ranks.⁶⁸ The confusion then became general, and the dismayed troops of Maxentius, pursued by an implacable enemy, rushed by thousands into the deep and rapid stream of the Tiber. The emperor himself attempted to escape back into the city over the Milvian bridge, but the crowds which pressed together through that narrow passage forced him into the river, where he was immediately drowned by the weight of his armour.⁶⁹ His body, which had sunk very deep into the mud, was

⁶⁶ Maxentius . . . tandem urbe in Saxa Rubra, millia ferme novem ægerrime progressus. Aurelius Victor. [de Cæsar. 40.] See Cellarius Geograph. Antiq. tom. i. p. 463. Saxa Rubra was in the neighbourhood of the Cremera, a trifling rivulet, illustrated by the valour and glorious death of the three hundred Fabii.

⁶⁷ The post which Maxentius had taken, with the Tiber in his rear, is very clearly described by the two Panegyrist, ix. 16, x. 28.

⁶⁸ Exceptis latrocinii illius primis auctoribus, qui desperatâ veniâ, locum quem pugnae sumperant texere corporibus. Panegy. Vet. ix. 17.

⁶⁹ A very idle rumour soon prevailed, that Maxentius, who had not taken any precaution for his own retreat, had contrived a very artful snare to destroy the army of the pursuers; but that the wooden bridge, which was to have been loosened on the approach of Constantine, unluckily broke down under the weight of the flying Italians. M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. part i. p. 576) very seriously examines whether, in contradiction to common sense, the testimony of Eusebius and Zosimus ought to prevail over the silence of Lactantius, Nazarius, and the anonymous but contemporary orator who composed the ninth Panegyric.*

* Manso (Beylage, vi.) examines the question, and adduces two manifest allusions to the bridge from the Life of Con-

stantine by Praxagoras, and from Libanius. Is it not very probable that such a bridge was thrown over the river to facilitate the

found with some difficulty the next day. The sight of his head, when it was exposed to the eyes of the people, convinced them of their deliverance, and admonished them to receive with acclamations of loyalty and gratitude the fortunate Constantine, who thus achieved by his valour and ability the most splendid enterprise of his life.⁷⁰

In the use of victory Constantine neither deserved the praise of clemency nor incurred the censure of immoderate rigour.⁷¹ He inflicted the same treatment to which a defeat would have exposed his own person and family, put to death the two sons of the tyrant, and carefully extirpated his whole race. The most distinguished adherents of Maxentius must have expected to share his fate, as they had shared his prosperity and his crimes; but when the Roman people loudly demanded a greater number of victims, the conqueror resisted, with firmness and humanity, those servile clamours, which were dictated by flattery as well as by resentment. Informers were punished and discouraged; the innocent who had suffered under the late tyranny were recalled from exile, and restored to their estates. A general act of oblivion quieted the minds and settled the property of the people both in Italy and in Africa.⁷² The first time that Constantine honoured the senate with his presence he recapitulated his own services and exploits in a modest oration, assured that illustrious order of his sincere regard, and promised to re-establish its ancient dignity and privileges. The grateful senate repaid these unmeaning professions by the empty titles of honour which it was yet in their power to bestow; and, without presuming to ratify the authority of Constantine, they passed a decree to assign him the first rank among the three *Augusti* who governed the Roman world.⁷³ Games and festivals were instituted to preserve the fame of his victory, and several edifices, raised at the expense of Maxentius, were

His reception,

⁷⁰ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 15, sq.] p. 86-88, and the two Panegyrics, the former of which was pronounced a few months afterwards, afford the clearest notion of this great battle. Lactantius, Eusebius, and even the Epitomes, supply several useful hints.

⁷¹ Zosimus, the enemy of Constantine, allows (l. ii. [c. 17] p. 88) that only a few of the friends of Maxentius were put to death; but we may remark the expressive passage of Nazarius (Panegy. Vet. x. 6): *Omnibus qui labefactari statum ejus poterant cum stirpe deletis.* The other orator (Panegy. Vet. ix. 20, 21) contents himself with observing that Constantine, when he entered Rome, did not imitate the cruel massacres of Cinna, of Marius, or of Sylla.

⁷² See the two Panegyrics, and the laws of this and the ensuing year, in the Theodosian Code.

⁷³ Panegy. Vet. ix. 20. Lactantius de M. P. c. 44. Maximin, who was confessedly the eldest Cæsar, claimed, with some show of reason, the first rank among the Augusti.

advance, and to secure the retreat, of the army of Maxentius? In case of defeat, orders were given for destroying it in order to check the pursuit: it broke down accidentally, or in the confusion was destroyed,

as has not unfrequently been the case, before the proper time.—M.

^a This may refer to the son or sons of Maxentius.—M.

dedicated to the honour of his successful rival. The triumphal arch of Constantine still remains a melancholy proof of the decline of the arts, and a singular testimony of the meanest vanity. As it was not possible to find in the capital of the empire a sculptor who was capable of adorning that public monument, the arch of Trajan, without any respect either for his memory or for the rules of propriety, was stripped of its most elegant figures. The difference of times and persons, of actions and characters, was totally disregarded. The Parthian captives appear prostrate at the feet of a prince who never carried his arms beyond the Euphrates; and curious antiquarians can still discover the head of Trajan on the trophies of Constantine. The new ornaments which it was necessary to introduce between the vacancies of ancient sculpture are executed in the rudest and most unskilful manner.⁷⁴

The final abolition of the Prætorian guards was a measure of prudence as well as of revenge. Those haughty troops, whose numbers and privileges had been restored, and even augmented, by Maxentius, were for ever suppressed by Constantine. Their fortified camp was destroyed, and the few Prætorians who had escaped the fury of the sword were dispersed among the legions and banished to the frontiers of the empire, where they might be serviceable without again becoming dangerous.⁷⁵ By suppressing the troops which were usually stationed in Rome, Constantine gave the fatal blow to the dignity of the senate and people, and the disarmed capital was exposed, without protection, to the insults or neglect of its distant master. We may observe that, in this last effort to preserve their expiring freedom, the Romans, from the apprehension of a tribute, had raised Maxentius to the throne. He exacted that tribute from the senate under the name of a free gift. They implored the assistance of Constantine. He vanquished the tyrant, and converted the free gift into a perpetual tax. The senators, according to the declaration which was required of their property, were divided into several classes. The most opulent paid annually eight pounds of gold, the next class paid four, the last two, and those whose poverty might have claimed an exemption were assessed however at seven pieces of gold. Besides the regular members of the senate, their sons, their descendants, and even their relations, enjoyed the vain

⁷⁴ *Adhuc cuncta opera quæ magnifice construxerat, urbis fanum, atque basilicam, Flavii meritis patres sacravere.* Aurelius Victor. [de Casar. 40.] With regard to the theft of Trajan's trophies, consult Flaminius Vacca, apud Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum*, p. 250, and l'Antiquité Expliquée of the latter, tom. iv. p. 171.

⁷⁵ *Prætoriæ legiones ac subsidia factionibus aptiora quam urbi Romæ, sublata penitus; simul arma atque usus indumenti militaris.* Aurelius Victor. [l. c.] Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 17] p. 89) mentions this fact as an historian, and it is very pompously celebrated in the ninth Panegyric.

privileges and supported the heavy burdens of the senatorial order; nor will it any longer excite our surprise that Constantine should be attentive to increase the number of persons who were included under so useful a description.⁷⁶ After the defeat of Maxentius the victorious emperor passed no more than two or three months in Rome, which he visited twice during the remainder of his life to celebrate the solemn festivals of the tenth and of the twentieth years of his reign. Constantine was almost perpetually in motion, to exercise the legions or to inspect the state of the provinces. Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Sirmium, Naissus, and Thessalonica were the occasional places of his residence till he founded a NEW ROME on the confines of Europe and Asia.⁷⁷

Before Constantine marched into Italy he had secured the friendship, or at least the neutrality, of Licinius, the Illyrian emperor. He had promised his sister Constantia in marriage to that prince; but the celebration of the nuptials was deferred till after the conclusion of the war, and the interview of the two emperors at Milan, which was appointed for that purpose, appeared to cement the union of their families and interests.⁷⁸ In the midst of the public festivity they were suddenly obliged to take leave of each other. An inroad of the Franks summoned Constantine to the Rhine, and the hostile approach of the sovereign of Asia demanded the immediate presence of Licinius. Maximin had been the secret ally of Maxentius, and, without being discouraged by his fate, he resolved to try the fortune of a civil war. He moved out of Syria, towards the frontiers of Bithynia, in the depth of winter. The season was severe and tempestuous; great numbers of men as well as horses perished in the snow; and as the roads were broken up by incessant rains, he was obliged to leave behind him a considerable part of the heavy baggage, which was unable to follow the rapidity of his forced marches. By this extraordinary effort of diligence, he arrived, with a harassed but formidable army, on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus before

His alliance with Licinius.
A.D. 313.
March.

War between Maximin and Licinius.
A.D. 313.

⁷⁶ *Ex omnibus provinciis optimates viros Curia tue pigneraveris; ut Senatûs dignitas . . . ex totius Orbis flore consisteret.* Nazarius in Panegy. Vet. x. [ix.] 35. The word *pigneraveris* might almost seem maliciously chosen. Concerning the senatorial tax, see Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 38] p. 115; the second title of the sixth book of the Theodosian Code, with Godefroy's Commentary; and *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxviii. p. 726.

⁷⁷ From the Theodosian Code we may now begin to trace the motions of the emperors; but the dates both of time and place have frequently been altered by the carelessness of transcribers.

⁷⁸ Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 17] p. 89) observes, that before the war the sister of Constantine had been betrothed to Licinius. According to the younger Victor [Epit. c. 39], Diocletian was invited to the nuptials; but having ventured to plead his age and infirmities, he received a second letter filled with reproaches for his supposed partiality to the cause of Maxentius and Maximin.

the lieutenants of Licinius were apprised of his hostile intentions. Byzantium surrendered to the power of Maximin after a siege of eleven days. He was detained some days under the walls of Heraclea; and he had no sooner taken possession of that city than he was alarmed by the intelligence that Licinius had pitched his camp at the distance of only eighteen miles. After a fruitless negotiation, in which the two princes attempted to seduce the fidelity of each other's adherents, they had recourse to arms. The emperor of the East commanded a disciplined and veteran army of above seventy thousand men; and Licinius, who had collected about thirty thousand Illyrians, was at first oppressed by the superiority of numbers. His military skill and the firmness of his troops restored the day, and obtained a decisive victory. The incredible speed which Maximin exerted in his flight is much more celebrated than his prowess in the battle. Twenty-four hours afterwards he was seen pale, trembling, and without his Imperial ornaments, at Nicomedia, one hundred and sixty miles from the place of his defeat. The wealth of Asia was yet unexhausted; and though the flower of his veterans had fallen in the late action, he had still power, if he could obtain time, to draw very numerous levies from Syria and Egypt. But he survived his misfortune only three or four months. His death, which happened at Tarsus, was variously ascribed to despair, to poison, and to the divine justice. As Maximin was alike destitute of abilities and of virtue, he was lamented neither by the people nor by the soldiers. The provinces of the East, delivered from the terrors of civil war, cheerfully acknowledged the authority of Licinius.⁷⁹

The vanquished emperor left behind him two children, a boy of about eight, and a girl of about seven, years old. Their inoffensive age might have excited compassion; but the compassion of Licinius was a very feeble resource, nor did it restrain him from *extinguishing* the name and memory of his adversary. The death of Severianus will admit of less excuse, as it was dictated neither by revenge nor by policy. The conqueror had never received any injury from the father of that unhappy youth, and the short and obscure reign of Severus, in a distant part of the empire, was already forgotten. But the execution of Candidianus was an act of the blackest cruelty and ingratitude. He was the natural son of Galerius, the friend and benefactor of Licinius. The prudent father had judged him too young to sustain the weight of a diadem; but he

The defeat,
April 30,

and death of
the former,
August.

Cruelty of
Licinius.

⁷⁹ Zosimus mentions the defeat and death of Maximin as ordinary events; but Lactantius expatiates on them (de M. P. c. 45-50), ascribing them to the miraculous interposition of Heaven. Licinius at that time was one of the protectors of the church.

hoped that, under the protection of princes who were indebted to his favour for the Imperial purple, Candidianus might pass a secure and honourable life. He was now advancing towards the twentieth year of his age, and the royalty of his birth, though unsupported either by merit or ambition, was sufficient to exasperate the jealous mind of Licinius.⁸⁰ To these innocent and illustrious victims of his tyranny we must add the wife and daughter of the emperor Diocletian. When that prince conferred on Galerius the title of Cæsar, he had given him in marriage his daughter Valeria, whose melancholy adventures might furnish a very singular subject for tragedy. She had fulfilled and even surpassed the duties of a wife. As she had not any children herself, she condescended to adopt the illegitimate son of her husband, and invariably displayed towards the unhappy Candidianus the tenderness and anxiety of a real mother. After the death of Galerius, her ample possessions provoked the avarice, and her personal attractions excited the desires, of his successor, Maximin.⁸¹ He had a wife still alive; but divorce was permitted by the Roman law, and the fierce passions of the tyrant demanded an immediate gratification. The answer of Valeria was such as became the daughter and widow of emperors; but it was tempered by the prudence which her defenceless condition compelled her to observe. She represented to the persons whom Maximin had employed on this occasion, "that, even if honour could permit a woman of her character and dignity to entertain a thought of second nuptials, decency at least must forbid her to listen to his addresses at a time when the ashes of her husband and his benefactor were still warm, and while the sorrows of her mind were still expressed by her mourning garments. She ventured to declare that she could place very little confidence in the professions of a man whose cruel inconstancy was capable of repudiating a faithful and affectionate wife."⁸² On this repulse, the love of Maximin was converted into fury; and as witnesses and judges were always at his disposal, it was easy for him to cover his fury with an appearance of legal proceedings, and to assault the reputation as well as the happiness of Valeria. Her estates were confiscated, her eunuchs and domestics devoted to the most inhuman tortures; and several innocent

Unfortunate
fate of the
empress
Valeria and
her mother.

⁸⁰ Lactantius de M. P. c. 50. Aurelius Victor touches on the different conduct of Licinius, and of Constantine, in the use of victory.

⁸¹ The sensual appetites of Maximin were gratified at the expense of his subjects. His eunuchs, who forced away wives and virgins, examined their naked charms with anxious curiosity, lest any part of their body should be found unworthy of the royal embraces. Coyness and disdain were considered as treason, and the obstinate fair one was condemned to be drowned. A custom was gradually introduced that no person should marry a wife without the permission of the emperor, "ut ipse in omnibus nuptiis prægustator esset." Lactantius de M. P. c. 38.

⁸² Lactantius de M. P. c. 39.

and respectable matrons, who were honoured with her friendship, suffered death, on a false accusation of adultery. The empress herself, together with her mother Prisca, was condemned to exile; and as they were ignominiously hurried from place to place before they were confined to a sequestered village in the deserts of Syria, they exposed their shame and distress to the provinces of the East, which, during thirty years, had respected their august dignity. Diocletian made several ineffectual efforts to alleviate the misfortunes of his daughter; and, as the last return that he expected for the Imperial purple which he had conferred upon Maximin, he entreated that Valeria might be permitted to share his retirement of Salona, and to close the eyes of her afflicted father.⁸³ He entreated; but as he could no longer threaten, his prayers were received with coldness and disdain; and the pride of Maximin was gratified in treating Diocletian as a suppliant, and his daughter as a criminal. The death of Maximin seemed to assure the empresses of a favourable alteration in their fortune. The public disorders relaxed the vigilance of their guard, and they easily found means to escape from the place of their exile, and to repair, though with some precaution, and in disguise, to the court of Licinius. His behaviour, in the first days of his reign, and the honourable reception which he gave to young Candidianus, inspired Valeria with a secret satisfaction, both on her own account, and on that of her adopted son. But these grateful prospects were soon succeeded by horror and astonishment; and the bloody executions which stained the palace of Nicomedia sufficiently convinced her that the throne of Maximin was filled by a tyrant more inhuman than himself. Valeria consulted her safety by a hasty flight, and, still accompanied by her mother Prisca, they wandered above fifteen months⁸⁴ through the provinces, concealed in the disguise of plebeian habits. They were at length discovered at Thessalonica; and as the sentence of their death was already pronounced, they were immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the sea. The people gazed on the melancholy spectacle; but their grief and indignation were suppressed by the terrors of a military guard. Such was the unworthy fate of the wife and daughter of Diocletian. We lament their misfortunes, we cannot discover

⁸³ Diocletian at last sent *cognatum suum, quendam militarem ac potentem virum*, to intercede in favour of his daughter (Lactantius de M. P. c. 41). We are not sufficiently acquainted with the history of these times to point out the person who was employed.

⁸⁴ Valeria quoque per varias provincias quindecim mensibus plebeio cultu pervagata. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. There is some doubt whether we should compute the fifteen months from the moment of her exile, or from that of her escape. The expression of *pervagata* seems to denote the latter; but in that case we must suppose that the treatise of Lactantius was written after the first civil war between Licinius and Constantine. See Cuper, p. 254.

their crimes; and whatever idea we may justly entertain of the cruelty of Licinius, it remains a matter of surprise that he was not contented with some more secret and decent method of revenge.⁸⁵

The Roman world was now divided between Constantine and Licinius, the former of whom was master of the West, and the latter of the East. It might perhaps have been expected that the conquerors, fatigued with civil war, and connected by a private as well as public alliance, would

Quarrel
between
Constantine
and Licinius.
A.D. 314.

have renounced, or at least would have suspended, any farther designs of ambition. And yet a year had scarcely elapsed after the death of Maximin, before the victorious emperors turned their arms against each other. The genius, the success, and the aspiring temper of Constantine, may seem to mark him out as the aggressor; but the perfidious character of Licinius justifies the most unfavourable suspicions, and by the faint light which history reflects on this transaction⁸⁶ we may discover a conspiracy fomented by his arts against the authority of his colleague. Constantine had lately given his sister Anastasia in marriage to Bassianus, a man of a considerable family and fortune, and had elevated his new kinsman to the rank of Cæsar. According to the system of government instituted by Diocletian, Italy, and perhaps Africa, were designed for his department in the empire. But the performance of the promised favour was either attended with so much delay, or accompanied with so many unequal conditions, that the fidelity of Bassianus was alienated rather than secured by the honourable distinction which he had obtained. His nomination had been ratified by the consent of Licinius; and that artful prince, by the means of his emissaries, soon contrived to enter into a secret and dangerous correspondence with the new Cæsar, to irritate his discontents, and to urge him to the rash enterprise of extorting by violence what he might in vain solicit from the justice of Constantine. But the vigilant emperor discovered the conspiracy before it was ripe for execution; and, after solemnly renouncing the alliance of Bassianus, despoiled him of the purple, and inflicted the deserved punishment on his treason and ingratitude. The haughty refusal of Licinius, when he was required to deliver up the criminals who had taken refuge in his dominions, confirmed the suspicions already entertained of his perfidy; and the indignities offered at Æmona, on the frontiers of Italy, to the statues of

⁸⁵ Ita illis pudicitia et conditio exitio fuit. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. He relates the misfortunes of the innocent wife and daughter of Diocletian with a very natural mixture of pity and exultation.

⁸⁶ The curious reader who consults the Valesian Fragment, p. 713, will probably accuse me of giving a bold and licentious paraphrase; but if he considers it with attention, he will acknowledge that my interpretation is probable and consistent.

Constantine, became the signal of discord between the two princes.⁸⁷

The first battle was fought near Cibalis, a city of Pannonia, situated on the river Save, about fifty miles above Sirmium.⁸⁸ From the inconsiderable forces which in this important contest two such powerful monarchs brought into the field, it may be inferred that the one was suddenly provoked, and that the other was unexpectedly surprised.

First civil
war between
them.
Battle of
Cibalis,
A.D. 315.^a
Oct. 8.

The emperor of the West had only twenty thousand, and the sovereign of the East no more than five-and-thirty thousand, men. The inferiority of number was, however, compensated by the advantage of the ground. Constantine had taken post in a defile about half a mile in breadth, between a steep hill and a deep morass, and in that situation he steadily expected and repulsed the first attack of the enemy. He pursued his success, and advanced into the plain. But the veteran legions of Illyricum rallied under the standard of a leader who had been trained to arms in the school of Probus and Diocletian. The missile weapons on both sides were soon exhausted; the two armies, with equal valour, rushed to a closer engagement of swords and spears, and the doubtful contest had already lasted from the dawn of the day to a late hour of the evening, when the right wing, which Constantine led in person, made a vigorous and decisive charge. The judicious retreat of Licinius saved the remainder of his troops from a total defeat; but when he computed his loss, which amounted to more than twenty thousand men, he thought it unsafe to pass the night in the presence of an active and victorious enemy. Abandoning his camp and magazines, he marched away with secrecy and diligence at the head of the greatest part of his cavalry, and was soon removed beyond the danger of a pursuit. His diligence preserved his wife, his son, and his treasures, which he had deposited at Sirmium. Licinius passed through that city, and, breaking down the bridge on the Save, hastened to collect a new army in Dacia and Thrace. In his flight he bestowed the precarious title of Cæsar on Valens, his general of the Illyrian frontier.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ The situation of Æmona, or, as it is now called, Laybach, in Carniola (d'Anville, *Géographie Ancienne*, tom. i. p. 187), may suggest a conjecture. As it lay to the north-east of the Julian Alps, that important territory became a natural object of dispute between the sovereigns of Italy and of Illyricum.

⁸⁸ Cibalis or Cibala (whose name is still preserved in the obscure ruins of Swilei) was situated about fifty miles from Sirmium, the capital of Illyricum, and about one hundred from Taurunum, or Belgrade, and the conflux of the Danube and the Save. The Roman garrisons and cities on those rivers are finely illustrated by M. d'Anville, in a memoir inserted in *l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxviii.

⁸⁹ Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 18] p. 90, 91) gives a very particular account of this battle; but the descriptions of Zosimus are rhetorical rather than military.

^a Rather A.D. 314. See Clinton, *Fasti Rom.* vol. i. p. 367.—S.

The plain of Mardia in Thrace was the theatre of a second battle no less obstinate and bloody than the former. The troops on both sides displayed the same valour and discipline; ^{Battle of Mardia.} and the victory was once more decided by the superior abilities of Constantine, who directed a body of five thousand men to gain an advantageous height, from whence, during the heat of the action, they attacked the rear of the enemy, and made a very considerable slaughter. The troops of Licinius, however, presenting a double front, still maintained their ground till the approach of night put an end to the combat, and secured their retreat towards the mountains of Macedonia.⁹⁰ The loss of two battles, and of his bravest veterans, reduced the fierce spirit of Licinius to sue for peace. His ambassador, Mistrianus, was admitted to the audience of Constantine: he expatiated on the common topics of moderation and humanity, which are so familiar to the eloquence of the vanquished; represented in the most insinuating language that the event of the war was still doubtful, whilst its inevitable calamities were alike pernicious to both the contending parties; and declared that he was authorised to propose a lasting and honourable peace in the name of the *two* emperors his masters. Constantine received the mention of Valens with indignation and contempt. "It was not for such a purpose," he sternly replied, "that we have advanced from the shores of the western ocean in an uninterrupted course of combats and victories, that, after rejecting an ungrateful kinsman, we should accept for our colleague a contemptible slave. The abdication of Valens is the first article of the treaty."⁹¹ It was necessary to accept this humiliating condition; and the unhappy Valens, after a reign of a few days, was deprived of the purple and of his life. As soon as this obstacle was removed, the tranquillity of the Roman world was easily restored. The successive defeats of Licinius had ruined his forces, but they had displayed his courage and abilities. His situation was almost desperate, but the efforts of despair are sometimes formidable, and the good sense of Constantine preferred a great and certain advantage to a third trial of the chance of arms. He consented to leave his rival, or, as he again styled Licinius, his friend and brother, in the possession of Thrace, Asia ^{Treaty of peace. December.}

⁹⁰ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 19,] p. 92, 93. Anonym. Valesian. p. 713. The Epitomes furnish some circumstances; but they frequently confound the two wars between Licinius and Constantine.

⁹¹ Petrus Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 27 [ed. Paris; p. 19, ed. Ven.; p. 129, ed. Bonn]. If it should be thought that γάμλος signifies more properly a son-in-law, we might conjecture that Constantine, assuming the name as well as the duties of a father, had adopted his younger brothers and sisters, the children of Theodora. But in the best authors γάμλος sometimes signifies a husband, sometimes a father-in-law, and sometimes a kinsman in general. See Spanheim Observat. ad Julian. Orat. i. p. 72.

Minor, Syria, and Egypt; but the provinces of Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, were yielded to the Western empire, and the dominions of Constantine now extended from the confines of Caledonia to the extremity of Peloponnesus. It was stipulated by the same treaty that three royal youths, the sons of the emperors, should be called to the hopes of the succession. Crispus and the young Constantine were soon afterwards declared Cæsars in the West, while the younger Licinius was invested with the same dignity in the East. In this double proportion of honours, the conqueror asserted the superiority of his arms and power.⁹²

The reconciliation of Constantine and Licinius, though it was embittered by resentment and jealousy, by the remembrance of recent injuries, and by the apprehension of future dangers, maintained, however, above eight years, the tranquillity of the Roman world. As a very regular series of the Imperial laws commences about this period, it would not be difficult to transcribe the civil regulations which employed the leisure of Constantine. But the most important of his institutions are intimately connected with the new system of policy and religion, which was not perfectly established till the last and peaceful years of his reign. There are many of his laws which, as far as they concern the rights and property of individuals, and the practice of the bar, are more properly referred to the private than to the public jurisprudence of the empire; and he published many edicts of so local and temporary a nature, that they would ill deserve the notice of a general history. Two laws, however, may be selected from the crowd; the one for its importance, the other for its singularity; the former for its remarkable benevolence, the latter for its excessive severity. 1. The horrid practice, so familiar to the ancients, of exposing or murdering their new-born infants, was become every day more frequent in the provinces, and especially in Italy. It was the effect of distress; and the distress was principally occasioned by the intolerable burden of taxes, and by the vexatious as well as cruel prosecutions of the officers of the revenue against their insolvent debtors. The less opulent or less industrious part of mankind, instead of rejoicing in an increase of family, deemed it an act of paternal tenderness to release their children from the impending miseries of a life which they themselves

General
peace, and
laws of
Constantine.
A.D. 315-323.

⁹² Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 20] p. 93. Anonym. Valesian. p. 713. Eutropius, x. 4. Aurelius Victor, Euseb. in Chron. [An. CCCCXVIII.] Sozomen, l. i. c. 2. Four of these writers affirm that the promotion of the Cæsars was an article of the treaty. It is however certain that the younger Constantine and Licinius were not yet born; and it is highly probable that the promotion was made the 1st of March, A.D. 317. The treaty had probably stipulated that the two Cæsars might be created by the western, and one only by the eastern emperor; but each of them reserved to himself the choice of the persons.

were unable to support. The humanity of Constantine, moved, perhaps, by some recent and extraordinary instances of despair, engaged him to address an edict to all the cities of Italy, and afterwards of Africa, directing immediate and sufficient relief to be given to those parents who should produce before the magistrates the children whom their own poverty would not allow them to educate. But the promise was too liberal, and the provision too vague, to effect any general or permanent benefit.⁹³ The law, though it may merit some praise, served rather to display than to alleviate the public distress. It still remains an authentic monument to contradict and confound those venal orators who were too well satisfied with their own situation to discover either vice or misery under the government of a generous sovereign.⁹⁴ 2. The laws of Constantine against rapes were dictated with very little indulgence for the most amiable weaknesses of human nature; since the description of that crime was applied not only to the brutal violence which compelled, but even to the gentle seduction which might persuade, an unmarried woman, under the age of twenty-five, to leave the house of her parents. "The successful ravisher was punished with death; and as if simple death was inadequate to the enormity of his guilt, he was either burnt alive, or torn in pieces by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. The virgin's declaration that she had been carried away with her own consent, instead of saving her lover, exposed her to share his fate. The duty of a public prosecution was intrusted to the parents of the guilty or unfortunate maid; and if the sentiments of nature prevailed on them to dissemble the injury, and to repair by a subsequent marriage the honour of their family, they were themselves punished by exile and confiscation. The slaves, whether male or female, who were convicted of having been accessory to the rape or seduction, were burnt alive, or put to death by the ingenious torture of pouring down their throats a quantity of melted lead. As the crime was of a public kind, the accusation was permitted even to strangers. The commencement of the action was not limited to any term of years, and the consequences of the sentence were extended to the innocent offspring of such an irregular union."⁹⁵ But whenever the offence inspires less horror than the punishment, the rigour of penal law is obliged to give way to the common feelings of mankind. The most odious parts of this edict were softened or

⁹³ Codex Theodosian. l. xi. tit. 27, tom. iv. p. 188, with Godefroy's observations. See likewise, l. v. tit. 7, 8.

⁹⁴ *Omnia foris placida, domi prospera, annonæ ubertate, fructuum copiâ, &c.* Panegy. Vet. x. 38. This oration of Nazarius was pronounced on the day of the Quinquennialia of the Cæsars, the 1st of March, A.D. 321.

⁹⁵ See the edict of Constantine, addressed to the Roman people, in the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. 24, tom. iii. p. 189.

repealed in the subsequent reigns; ⁹⁶ and even Constantine himself very frequently alleviated, by partial acts of mercy, the stern temper of his general institutions. Such, indeed, was the singular humour of that emperor, who showed himself as indulgent, and even remiss, in the execution of his laws, as he was severe, and even cruel, in the enacting of them. It is scarcely possible to observe a more decisive symptom of weakness, either in the character of the prince, or in the constitution of the government. ⁹⁷

The civil administration was sometimes interrupted by the military defence of the empire. Crispus, a youth of the most amiable character, who had received with the title of Cæsar the command of the Rhine, distinguished his conduct as well as valour in several victories over the Franks and Alemanni, and taught the barbarians of that frontier to dread the eldest son of Constantine, and the grandson of Constantius. ⁹⁸ The emperor himself had assumed the more difficult and important province of the Danube. The Goths, who in the time of Claudius and Aurelian had felt the weight of the Roman arms, respected the power of the empire, even in the midst of its intestine divisions. But the strength of that warlike nation was now restored by a peace of near fifty years; a new generation had arisen, who no longer remembered the misfortunes of ancient days: the Sarmatians of the lake Mæotis followed the Gothic standard either as subjects or as allies, and their united force was poured upon the countries of Illyricum. Campona, Margus, and Bononia, appear to have been the scenes of several memorable sieges and battles; ⁹⁹ and though Constantine encountered a very obstinate resistance, he prevailed at length in the contest, and the Goths were compelled to purchase an ignominious retreat by restoring the booty and prisoners which they had taken. Nor was this advantage sufficient to satisfy the indignation of the emperor. He resolved to

⁹⁶ His son very fairly assigns the true reason of the repeal, "Ne sub specie atrocioris judicii aliqua in ulciscendo crimine dilatio nasceretur." Cod. Theod. tom. iii. p. 193.

⁹⁷ Eusebius (in Vita Constant. l. iii. c. 1) chooses to affirm that in the reign of this hero the sword of justice hung idle in the hands of the magistrates. Eusebius himself (l. iv. c. 29, 54) and the Theodosian Code will inform us that this excessive lenity was not owing to the want either of atrocious criminals or of penal laws.

⁹⁸ Nazarius in Panegy. Vet. x. [36.] The victory of Crispus over the Alemanni is expressed on some medals.^a

⁹⁹ See Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 21] p. 93, 94; though the narrative of that historian is neither clear nor consistent. The Panegyric of Optatianus (c. 23) mentions the alliance of the Sarmatians with the Carpi and Getæ, and points out the several fields of battle. It is supposed that the Sarmatian games, celebrated in the month of November, derived their origin from the success of this war.

^a Other medals are extant, the legends of which commemorate the success of Constantine over the Sarmatians and other barbarous nations. SARMATIA DEVICTA. VIC-

TORIA GOTHICA. DEBELLATORI GENTIUM BARBARORUM. EXUPERATOR OMNIUM GENTIUM. St. Martin, note on Le Beau, i. 188.—M.

chastise as well as to repulse the insolent barbarians who had dared to invade the territories of Rome. At the head of his legions he passed the Danube, after repairing the bridge which had been constructed by Trajan, penetrated into the strongest recesses of Dacia,¹⁰⁰ and, when he had inflicted a severe revenge, condescended to give peace to the suppliant Goths, on condition that, as often as they were required, they should supply his armies with a body of forty thousand soldiers.¹⁰¹ Exploits like these were no doubt honourable to Constantine, and beneficial to the state; but it may surely be questioned whether they can justify the exaggerated assertion of Eusebius, that ALL SCYTHIA, as far as the extremity of the North, divided as it was into so many names and nations of the most various and savage manners, had been added by his victorious arms to the Roman empire.¹⁰²

In this exalted state of glory it was impossible that Constantine should any longer endure a partner in the empire. Confiding in the superiority of his genius and military power, he determined, without any previous injury, to exert them for the destruction of Licinius, whose advanced age and unpopular vices seemed to offer a very easy conquest.¹⁰³ But the old emperor, awakened by the approaching danger, deceived the expectations of his friends, as well as of his enemies. Calling forth that spirit and those abilities by which he had deserved the friendship of Galerius and the Imperial purple, he prepared himself for the contest, collected the forces of the East, and soon filled the plains of Hadrianople with his troops, and the Straits of the Hellespont with his fleet. The army consisted of one hundred and fifty thousand foot and fifteen thousand horse; and as the cavalry was drawn, for the most part, from Phrygia and Cappadocia, we may conceive a more favourable opinion of the beauty of the horses than of the courage and dexterity of their riders. The fleet was composed of three hundred and fifty galleys of three ranks of oars. An hundred and

Second civil war between Constantine and Licinius, A.D. 323.

¹⁰⁰ In the *Cæsars* of Julian (p. 329. *Commentaire* de Spanheim, p. 252). Constantine boasts that he had recovered the province (Dacia) which Trajan had subdued. But it is insinuated by Silenus that the conquests of Constantine were like the gardens of Adonis, which fade and wither almost the moment they appear.

¹⁰¹ *Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 21. I know not whether we may entirely depend on his authority. Such an alliance has a very recent air, and scarcely is suited to the maxims of the beginning of the fourth century.*

¹⁰² Eusebius in *Vit. Constantin.* l. i. c. 8. This passage, however, is taken from a general declamation on the greatness of Constantine, and not from any particular account of the Gothic war.

¹⁰³ *Constantinus tamen, vir ingens, et omnia efficere nitens quæ animo præparasset, simul principatum totius orbis affectans, Licinio bellum intulit.* Eutropius, x. 5 [4]. *Zosimus*, l. ii. [c. 18] p. 89. The reasons which they have assigned for the first civil war may, with more propriety, be applied to the second.

* The statement is rejected by Aschbach, *Geschichte der Westgothen*, p. 7.—8.

thirty of these were furnished by Egypt and the adjacent coast of Africa. An hundred and ten sailed from the ports of Phœnicia and the isle of Cyprus; and the maritime countries of Bithynia, Ionia, and Caria were likewise obliged to provide an hundred and ten galleys. The troops of Constantine were ordered to rendezvous at Thessalonica; they amounted to above an hundred and twenty thousand horse and foot.¹⁰⁴ Their emperor was satisfied with their martial appearance, and his army contained more soldiers, though fewer men, than that of his eastern competitor. The legions of Constantine were levied in the warlike provinces of Europe; action had confirmed their discipline, victory had elevated their hopes, and there were among them a great number of veterans, who, after seventeen glorious campaigns under the same leader, prepared themselves to deserve an honourable dismissal by a last effort of their valour.¹⁰⁵ But the naval preparations of Constantine were in every respect much inferior to those of Licinius. The maritime cities of Greece sent their respective quotas of men and ships to the celebrated harbour of Piræus, and their united forces consisted of no more than two hundred small vessels: a very feeble armament, if it is compared with those formidable fleets which were equipped and maintained by the republic of Athens during the Peloponnesian war.¹⁰⁶ Since Italy was no longer the seat of government, the naval establishments of Misenum and Ravenna had been gradually neglected; and as the shipping and mariners of the empire were supported by commerce rather than by war, it was natural that they should the most abound in the industrious provinces of Egypt and Asia. It is only surprising that the eastern emperor, who possessed so great a superiority at sea, should have neglected the opportunity of carrying an offensive war into the centre of his rival's dominions.

Instead of embracing such an active resolution, which might have changed the whole face of the war, the prudent Licinius expected the approach of his rival in a camp near Hadrianople, which he had fortified with an anxious care that betrayed his apprehension of the event. Constantine directed his march from Thessalonica towards that part of Thrace, till he found himself stopped by the broad and rapid stream of the Hebrus, and discovered the

Battle of
Hadrianople,
A.D. 323,
July 3.

¹⁰⁴ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 22] p. 94, 95.

¹⁰⁵ Constantine was very attentive to the privileges and comforts of his follow-veterans (Conveterani), as he now began to style them. See the Theodosian Code, l. vii. tit. 10, tom. ii. p. 419, 429.

¹⁰⁶ Whilst the Athenians maintained the empire of the sea, their fleet consisted of three, and afterwards of four, hundred galleys of three ranks of oars, all completely equipped and ready for immediate service. The arsenal in the port of Piræus had cost the republic a thousand talents, about two hundred and sixteen thousand pounds. See Thucydides de Bel. Pelopon. l. ii. c. 13; and Meursius de Fortuna Attica, c. 19.

numerous army of Licinius, which filled the steep ascent of the hill, from the river to the city of Hadrianople. Many days were spent in doubtful and distant skirmishes; but at length the obstacles of the passage and of the attack were removed by the intrepid conduct of Constantine. In this place we might relate a wonderful exploit of Constantine, which, though it can scarcely be paralleled either in poetry or romance, is celebrated, not by a venal orator devoted to his fortune, but by an historian, the partial enemy of his fame. We are assured that the valiant emperor threw himself into the river Hebrus accompanied only by *twelve* horsemen, and that by the effort or terror of his invincible arm, he broke, slaughtered, and put to flight a host of an hundred and fifty thousand men. The credulity of Zosimus prevailed so strongly over his passion, that, among the events of the memorable battle of Hadrianople, he seems to have selected and embellished, not the most important, but the most marvellous. The valour and danger of Constantine are attested by a slight wound which he received in the thigh; but it may be discovered, even from an imperfect narration, and perhaps a corrupted text, that the victory was obtained no less by the conduct of the general than by the courage of the hero; that a body of five thousand archers marched round to occupy a thick wood in the rear of the enemy, whose attention was diverted by the construction of a bridge; and that Licinius, perplexed by so many artful evolutions, was reluctantly drawn from his advantageous post to combat on equal ground in the plain. The contest was no longer equal. His confused multitude of new levies was easily vanquished by the experienced veterans of the West. Thirty-four thousand men are reported to have been slain. The fortified camp of Licinius was taken by assault the evening of the battle; the greater part of the fugitives, who had retired to the mountains, surrendered themselves the next day to the discretion of the conqueror; and his rival, who could no longer keep the field, confined himself within the walls of Byzantium.¹⁰⁷

The siege of Byzantium, which was immediately undertaken by Constantine, was attended with great labour and uncertainty. In the late civil wars, the fortifications of that place, so justly considered as the key of Europe and Asia, had been repaired and strengthened; and as long as Licinius re-

Siege of
Byzantium,
and naval
victory of
Crispus.

¹⁰⁷ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 22] p. 95, 96. This great battle is described in the Valesian fragment (p. 714) [ad fin. Amm. Marcell. vol. ii p. 300, ed. Bip.] in a clear though concise manner. "Licinius vero circum Hadrianopolin maximo exercitu latera ardui montis impleverat; illuc toto agmine Constantinus inflexit. Cum bellum terrâ marique traheretur, quamvis per arduum suis nitentibus, attamen disciplinâ militari et felicitate, Constantinus Licinii confusum et sine ordine agentem vicit exercitum; leviter femore sauciatum."

mained master of the sea, the garrison was much less exposed to the danger of famine than the army of the besiegers. The naval commanders of Constantine were summoned to his camp, and received his positive orders to force the passage of the Hellespont, as the fleet of Licinius, instead of seeking and destroying their feeble enemy, continued inactive in those narrow straits, where its superiority of numbers was of little use or advantage. Crispus, the emperor's eldest son, was intrusted with the execution of this daring enterprise, which he performed with so much courage and success, that he deserved the esteem, and most probably excited the jealousy, of his father. The engagement lasted two days; and in the evening of the first, the contending fleets, after a considerable and mutual loss, retired into their respective harbours of Europe and Asia. The second day about noon a strong south wind¹⁰⁸ sprang up, which carried the vessels of Crispus against the enemy; and as the casual advantage was improved by his skilful intrepidity, he soon obtained a complete victory. An hundred and thirty vessels were destroyed, five thousand men were slain, and Amandus, the admiral of the Asiatic fleet, escaped with the utmost difficulty to the shores of Chalcedon. As soon as the Hellespont was open, a plentiful convoy of provisions flowed into the camp of Constantine, who had already advanced the operations of the siege. He constructed artificial mounds of earth of an equal height with the ramparts of Byzantium. The lofty towers which were erected on that foundation galled the besieged with large stones and darts from the military engines, and the battering rams had shaken the walls in several places. If Licinius persisted much longer in the defence, he exposed himself to be involved in the ruin of the place. Before he was surrounded, he prudently removed his person and treasures to Chalcedon in Asia; and as he was always desirous of associating companions to the hopes and dangers of his fortune, he now bestowed the title of Cæsar on Martinianus, who exercised one of the most important offices of the empire.¹⁰⁹

Such were still the resources, and such the abilities, of Licinius, that, after so many successive defeats, he collected in
Battle of
Chrysopolis. Bithynia a new army of fifty or sixty thousand men, while the activity of Constantine was employed in the siege of Byzantium. The vigilant emperor did not, however, neglect the last struggles

¹⁰⁸ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 24] p. 97, 98. The current always sets out of the Hellespont; and when it is assisted by a north wind, no vessel can attempt the passage. A south wind renders the force of the current almost imperceptible. See Tournefort's *Voyage au Levant*, Let. xi.

¹⁰⁹ Aurelius Victor. [de Cæsar. c. 41.] Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 25] p. 93. According to the latter, Martinianus was *Magister Officiorum* (he uses the Latin appellation in Greek). Some medals seem to intimate that during his short reign he received the title of Augustus.

of his antagonist. A considerable part of his victorious army was transported over the Bosphorus in small vessels, and the decisive engagement was fought soon after their landing on the heights of Chrysopolis, or, as it is now called, of Scutari. The troops of Licinius, though they were lately raised, ill armed, and worse disciplined, made head against their conquerors with fruitless but desperate valour, till a total defeat, and the slaughter of five-and-twenty thousand men, irretrievably determined the fate of their leader.¹¹⁰ He retired to Nicomedia, rather with the view of gaining some time for negotiation than with the hope of any effectual defence. Constantia, his wife, and the sister of Constantine, interceded with her brother in favour of her husband, and obtained from his policy, rather than from his compassion, a solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that after the sacrifice of Martinianus, and the resignation of the purple, Licinius himself should be permitted to pass the remainder of his life in peace and affluence. The behaviour of Constantia, and her relation to the contending parties, naturally recalls the remembrance of that virtuous matron who was the sister of Augustus and the wife of Antony. But the temper of mankind was altered, and it was no longer esteemed infamous for a Roman to survive his honour and independence. Licinius solicited and accepted the pardon of his offences, laid himself and his purple at the feet of his *lord* and *master*, was raised from the ground with insulting pity, was admitted the same day to the imperial banquet, and soon afterwards was sent away to Thessalonica, which had been chosen for the place of his confinement.¹¹¹ His confinement was soon terminated by death, and it is doubtful whether a tumult of the soldiers, or a decree of the senate, was suggested as the motive for his execution. According to the rules of tyranny, he was accused of forming a conspiracy, and of holding a treasonable correspondence with the barbarians; but as he was never convicted, either by his own conduct or by any legal evidence, we may perhaps be allowed, from his weakness, to presume his innocence.¹¹² The memory of Licinius was branded with infamy, his statues were thrown

Submission
and death of
Licinius.

¹¹⁰ Eusebius (in *Vita Constantin.* l. ii. c. 16, 17) ascribes this decisive victory to the pious prayers of the emperor. The Valesian fragment (p. 714) [Amm. Marcell. vol. ii. p. 301, ed. Bip.] mentions a body of Gothic auxiliaries, under their chief Aliquaca, who adhered to the party of Licinius.

¹¹¹ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 28] p. 102. Victor Junior in *Epitome*. [c. 41.] Anonym. Valesian. p. 714.

¹¹² *Contra religionem sacramenti Thessalonicae privatus occisus est.* Eutropius, x. 6 [4]; and his evidence is confirmed by Jerome (in *Chronic.*), as well as by Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 28] p. 102. The Valesian writer is the only one who mentions the soldiers, and it is Zonaras alone who calls in the assistance of the senate. Eusebius prudently slides over this delicate transaction. But Sozomen, a century afterwards, ventures to assert the treasonable practices of Licinius.

down, and by a hasty edict, of such mischievous tendency that it was almost immediately corrected, all his laws, and all the judicial proceedings of his reign, were at once abolished.¹¹³ By this victory of Constantine the Roman world was again united under the authority of one emperor, thirty-seven years after Diocletian had divided his power and provinces with his associate Maximian.

The successive steps of the elevation of Constantine, from his first assuming the purple at York, to the resignation of Licinius at Nicomedia, have been related with some minuteness and precision, not only as the events are in themselves both interesting and important, but still more as they contributed to the decline of the empire by the expense of blood and treasure, and by the perpetual increase, as well of the taxes as of the military establishment. The foundation of Constantinople, and the establishment of the Christian religion, were the immediate and memorable consequences of this revolution.

¹¹³ See the Theodosian Code, l. xv. tit. 15, tom. v. p. 404, 405. These edicts of Constantine betray a degree of passion and precipitancy very unbecoming the character of a lawgiver.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROGRESS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND THE SENTIMENTS, MANNERS, NUMBERS, AND CONDITION OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.*

A CANDID but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity may be considered as a very essential part ^{Importance of the inquiry.} of the history of the Roman empire. While that great body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and by the means of their colonies has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.

But this inquiry, however useful or entertaining, is attended with two peculiar difficulties. The scanty and suspicious materials ^{Its difficulties.} of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the church. The great law of impartiality too often obliges us to reveal the imperfections of the uninspired teachers and believers of the Gospel; and, to a careless observer, *their* faults may seem to cast a shade on the faith which they professed. But the scandal of the pious Christian, and the fallacious triumph of the Infidel, should cease as soon as they recollect not only *by whom*, but likewise *to whom*, the Divine Revelation was given. The theologian may indulge the pleasing task of describing Religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian. He must

* In spite of my resolution, Lardner led me to look through the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Gibbon. I could not lay them down without finishing them. The causes assigned, in the fifteenth chapter, for the diffusion of Christianity, must, no doubt, have contributed to it

materially; but I doubt whether he saw them all. Perhaps those which he enumerates are among the most obvious. They might all be safely adopted by a Christian writer, with some change in the language and manner. *Mackintosh*; see *Life*, i. p 244.—M.

discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings.^a

Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose, we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church? It will, perhaps, appear that it was most effectually favoured and assisted by the five following causes:—I. The inflexible, and, if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses.^b II. The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth. III. The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church. IV. The pure and austere morals of the Christians. V. The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire.

I. We have already described the religious harmony of the ancient world, and the facility with which the most different and even hostile nations embraced, or at least respected, each other's superstitions. A single people refused to join in the common intercourse of mankind. The Jews, who, under the

THE FIRST
CAUSE.
Zeal of the
Jews.

^a The art of Gibbon, or at least the unfair impression produced by these two memorable chapters, consists in confounding together, in one undistinguishable mass, the *origin* and *apostolic* propagation of the Christian religion with its later progress. The main question, the divine origin of the religion, is dexterously eluded or speciously conceded; his plan enables him to commence his account, in most parts, *below the apostolic times*; and it is only by the strength of the dark colouring with which he has brought out the failings and the follies of succeeding ages, that a shadow of doubt and suspicion is thrown back on the primitive period of Christi-

anity. Divest this whole passage of the latent sarcasm betrayed by the subsequent tone of the whole disquisition, and it might commence a Christian history, written in the most Christian spirit of candour.—M.

^b Though we are thus far agreed with respect to the inflexibility and intolerance of Christian zeal, yet, as to the principle from which it was derived, we are, *totò còlo*, divided in opinion. You deduce it from the Jewish religion; I would refer it to a more adequate and a more obvious source, a full persuasion of the truth of Christianity. *Watson; Letters to Gibbon, i. 9.—M.*

Assyrian and Persian monarchies, had languished for many ages the most despised portion of their slaves,¹ emerged from obscurity under the successors of Alexander; and as they multiplied to a surprising degree in the East, and afterwards in the West, they soon excited the curiosity and wonder of other nations.² The sullen obstinacy with which they maintained their peculiar rites and unsocial manners seemed to mark them out a distinct species of men, who boldly professed, or who faintly disguised, their implacable hatred to the rest of human-kind.³ Neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent nations, could ever persuade the Jews to associate with the institutions of Moses the elegant mythology of the Greeks.⁴ According to the maxims of universal toleration, the Romans protected a superstition which they despised.⁵ The polite Augustus condescended to give orders that sacrifices should be offered for his prosperity in the temple of Jerusalem;⁶ while the meanest of the posterity of Abraham, who should have paid the same homage to the Jupiter of the Capitol, would have been an object of abhorrence to himself and to his brethren.

¹ Dum Assyrios penes, Medosque, et Persas Oriens fuit, despectissima pars servientium. Tacit. Hist. v. 8. Herodotus, who visited Asia whilst it obeyed the last of those empires, slightly mentions the Syrians of Palestine, who, according to their own confession, had received from Egypt the rite of circumcision. See l. ii. c. 104.

² Diodorus Siculus, l. xl. [Eclog. 1, vol. ii. p. 542, ed. Wesseling.] Dion Cassius, l. xxxvii. [c. 16] p. 121. Tacit. Hist. v. 1-9. Justin, xxxvi. 2, 3.

³ Tradidit arcano quæcunque volumine Moses :

Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti.

Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos. [Juvenal, Sat. xiv. 102.]

The letter of this law is not to be found in the present volume of Moses. But the wise, the humane Maimonides openly teaches that, if an idolater fall into the water, a Jew ought not to save him from instant death. See Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vi. c. 28. [l. v. c. 24.]^a

⁴ A Jewish sect, which indulged themselves in a sort of occasional conformity, derived from Herod, by whose example and authority they had been seduced, the name of Herodians. But their numbers were so inconsiderable, and their duration so short, that Josephus has not thought them worthy of his notice. See Prideaux's Connection, vol. ii. p. 235.^b

⁵ Cicero pro Flacco, c. 28.^c

⁶ Philo de Legatione. Augustus left a foundation for a perpetual sacrifice. Yet he approved of the neglect which his grandson Caius expressed towards the temple of Jerusalem. See Sueton. in August. c. 93, and Casaubon's notes on that passage.

^a It is diametrically opposed to its spirit and to its letter; see among other passages, Deut. x. 18, 19 : (God) "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye, therefore, the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Juvenal is a satirist, whose strong expressions can hardly be received as historic evidence, and he wrote after the horrible cruelties of the Romans, which, during and after the war, might give some cause for the complete isolation of the Jew from the rest of the world. The Jew was a bigot, but his religion was not the only source of

his bigotry. After how many centuries of mutual wrong and hatred, which had still further estranged the Jew from mankind, did Maimonides write?—M.

^b The Herodians were probably more of a political party than a religious sect, though Gibbon is most likely right as to their occasional conformity. See Hist. of the Jews, ii. 108.—M.

^c The edicts of Julius Cæsar and of some of the cities in Asia Minor (Krebs. Decret. pro Judæis) in favour of the nation in general, or of the Asiatic Jews, speak a different language.—M.

But the moderation of the conquerors was insufficient to appease the jealous prejudices of their subjects, who were alarmed and scandalised at the ensigns of paganism, which necessarily introduced themselves into a Roman province.⁷ The mad attempt of Caligula to place his own statue in the temple of Jerusalem was defeated by the unanimous resolution of a people who dreaded death much less than such an idolatrous profanation.⁸ Their attachment to the law of Moses was equal to their detestation of foreign religions. The current of zeal and devotion, as it was contracted into a narrow channel, ran with the strength, and sometimes with the fury, of a torrent.

This inflexible perseverance, which appeared so odious or so ridiculous to the ancient world, assumes a more awful character, since Providence has deigned to reveal to us the mysterious history of the chosen people. But the devout and even scrupulous attachment to the Mosaic religion, so conspicuous among the Jews who lived under the second temple, becomes still more surprising, if it is compared with the stubborn incredulity of their forefathers. When the law was given in thunder from Mount Sinai; when the tides of the ocean and the course of the planets were suspended for the convenience of the Israelites; and when temporal rewards and punishments were the immediate consequences of their piety or disobedience, they perpetually relapsed into rebellion against the visible majesty of their Divine King, placed the idols of the nations in the sanctuary of Jehovah, and imitated every fantastic ceremony that was practised in the tents of the Arabs, or in the cities of Phœnicia.⁹ As the protection of Heaven was deservedly withdrawn from the ungrateful race, their faith acquired a proportionable degree of vigour and purity. The contemporaries of Moses and Joshua had beheld with careless indifference the most amazing miracles. Under the pressure of every calamity, the belief of those miracles has preserved the Jews of a later period from the universal contagion of idolatry; and in contradiction to every known principle of the human mind, that singular people seems to have yielded a stronger and more ready

⁷ See in particular, Joseph. *Antiquitat.* xvii. 6, xviii. 3; and *De Bell. Judaic.* i. 33, and ii. 9, edit. Havercamp.*

⁸ *Jussi a Caio Cesare, effigiem ejus in templo locare, arma potius sumpsero.* Tacit. *Hist.* v. 9. Philo and Josephus give a very circumstantial, but a very rhetorical, account of this transaction, which exceedingly perplexed the governor of Syria. At the first mention of this idolatrous proposal king Agrippa fainted away, and did not recover his senses until the third day.

⁹ For the enumeration of the Syrian and Arabian deities, it may be observed that Milton has comprised in one hundred and thirty very beautiful lines the two large and learned syntagmas which Selden had composed on that abstruse subject.

* This was during the government of the Roman governor, in general, resided Pontius Pilate (*Hist. of Jews*, ii. 156). at Caesarea.—M.
Probably, in part to avoid this collision,

assent to the traditions of their remote ancestors than to the evidence of their own senses.¹⁰

The Jewish religion was admirably fitted for defence, but it was never designed for conquest; and it seems probable that the number of proselytes was never much superior to that of apostates. The divine promises were originally made, and the distinguishing rite of circumcision was enjoined, to a single family. When the posterity of Abraham had multiplied like the sands of the sea, the Deity, from whose mouth they received a system of laws and ceremonies, declared himself the proper and as it were the national God of Israel; and with the most jealous care separated his favourite people from the rest of mankind. The conquest of the land of Canaan was accompanied with so many wonderful and with so many bloody circumstances, that the victorious Jews were left in a state of irreconcilable hostility with all their neighbours. They had been commanded to extirpate some of the most idolatrous tribes, and the execution of the Divine will had seldom been retarded by the weakness of humanity. With the other nations they were forbidden to contract any marriages or alliances; and the prohibition of receiving them into the congregation, which in some cases was perpetual, almost always extended to the third, to the seventh, or even to the tenth generation. The obligation of preaching to the Gentiles the faith of Moses had never been inculcated as a precept of the law, nor were the Jews inclined to impose it on themselves as a voluntary duty.

Their religion better suited to defence than to conquest.

In the admission of new citizens that unsocial people was actuated by the selfish vanity of the Greeks, rather than by the generous policy of Rome. The descendants of Abraham were flattered by the opinion that they alone were the heirs of the covenant, and they were apprehensive of diminishing the value of their inheritance by sharing

¹⁰ "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewn among them?" (Numbers xiv. 11.) It would be easy, but it would be unbecoming, to justify the complaint of the Deity from the whole tenor of the Mosaic history.^a

^a Among a rude and barbarous people religious impressions are easily made, and are as soon effaced. The ignorance which multiplies imaginary wonders would weaken or destroy the effect of real miracle. At the period of the Jewish history referred to in the passage from Numbers, their fears predominated over their faith,—the fears of an unwarlike people just rescued from debasing slavery, and commanded to attack a fierce, a well-armed, a gigantic, and a far more numerous race, the inhabitants of Canaan. As to the frequent apostacy of

the Jews, their religion was beyond their state of civilisation. Nor is it uncommon for a people to cling with passionate attachment to that of which, at first, they could not appreciate the value. Patriotism and national pride will contend, even to death, for political rights which have been forced upon a reluctant people. The Christian may at least retort, with justice, that the great sign of his religion, the resurrection of Jesus, was most ardently believed and most resolutely asserted by the eye-witnesses of the fact.—M.

it too easily with the strangers of the earth. A larger acquaintance with mankind extended their knowledge without correcting their prejudices; and whenever the God of Israel acquired any new votaries, he was much more indebted to the inconstant humour of polytheism than to the active zeal of his own missionaries.¹¹ The religion of Moses seems to be instituted for a particular country as well as for a single nation; and if a strict obedience had been paid to the order that every male, three times in the year, should present himself before the Lord Jehovah, it would have been impossible that the Jews could ever have spread themselves beyond the narrow limits of the promised land.¹² That obstacle was indeed removed by the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem; but the most considerable part of the Jewish religion was involved in its destruction; and the Pagans, who had long wondered at the strange report of an empty sanctuary,¹³ were at a loss to discover what could be the object, or what could be the instruments, of a worship which was destitute of temples and of altars, of priests and of sacrifices. Yet even in their fallen state, the Jews, still asserting their lofty and exclusive privileges, shunned, instead of courting, the society of strangers. They still insisted with inflexible rigour on those parts of the law which it was in their power to practise. Their peculiar distinctions of days, of meats, and a variety of trivial though burdensome observances, were so many objects of disgust and aversion for the other nations, to whose habits and prejudices they were diametrically opposite. The painful and even dangerous rite of circumcision was alone capable of repelling a willing proselyte from the door of the synagogue.¹⁴

More liberal
zeal of
Christianity.

Under these circumstances, Christianity offered itself to the world, armed with the strength of the Mosaic law, and delivered from the weight of its fetters. An exclusive zeal for the truth of religion and the unity of God was as carefully inculcated in the new as in the ancient system: and whatever was now revealed to mankind concerning the nature and designs of the Supreme Being was fitted to increase their reverence for that mysterious doctrine. The divine authority of Moses and the prophets

¹¹ All that relates to the Jewish proselytes has been very ably treated by Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, l. v. c. 6, 7.

¹² See *Exod.* xxxiv. 23, *Deut.* xvi. 16, the commentators, and a very sensible note in the *Universal History*, vol. i. p. 603, edit. fol.

¹³ When Pompey, using or abusing the right of conquest, entered into the Holy of Holies, it was observed with amazement, "Nulla intus Deum effigie, vacuum sedem et inania arcana." *Tacit. Hist.* v. 9. It was a popular saying, with regard to the Jews,

Nil præter nubes et cœli numen adorant.

¹⁴ A second kind of circumcision was inflicted on a Samaritan or Egyptian proselyte. The sullen indifference of the Talmudists, with respect to the conversion of strangers, may be seen in Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. v. c. 6.

was admitted, and even established, as the firmest basis of Christianity. From the beginning of the world an uninterrupted series of predictions had announced and prepared the long-expected coming of the Messiah, who, in compliance with the gross apprehensions of the Jews, had been more frequently represented under the character of a King and Conqueror, than under that of a Prophet, a Martyr, and the Son of God. By his expiatory sacrifice the imperfect sacrifices of the temple were at once consummated and abolished. The ceremonial law, which consisted only of types and figures, was succeeded by a pure and spiritual worship, equally adapted to all climates, as well as to every condition of mankind; and to the initiation of blood, was substituted a more harmless initiation of water. The promise of divine favour, instead of being partially confined to the posterity of Abraham, was universally proposed to the freeman and the slave, to the Greek and to the barbarian, to the Jew and to the Gentile. Every privilege that could raise the proselyte from earth to heaven, that could exalt his devotion, secure his happiness, or even gratify that secret pride which, under the semblance of devotion, insinuates itself into the human heart, was still reserved for the members of the Christian church; but at the same time all mankind was permitted, and even solicited, to accept the glorious distinction, which was not only proffered as a favour, but imposed as an obligation. It became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received, and to warn them against a refusal that would be severely punished as a criminal disobedience to the will of a benevolent but all-powerful Deity.

The enfranchisement of the church from the bonds of the synagogue was a work, however, of some time and of some difficulty. The Jewish converts, who acknowledged Jesus in the character of the Messiah foretold by their ancient oracles, respected him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion; but they obstinately adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors, and were desirous of imposing them on the Gentiles, who continually augmented the number of believers. These Judaising Christians seem to have argued with some degree of plausibility from the Divine origin of the Mosaic law, and from the immutable perfections of its great Author. They affirmed, *that*, if the Being who is the same through all eternity had designed to abolish those sacred rites which had served to distinguish his chosen people, the repeal of them would have been no less clear and solemn than their first promulgation: *that*, instead of those frequent declarations which either suppose or assert the perpetuity of the Mosaic religion, it would have been represented as a provisionary scheme intended to last only till

Obstinacy
and reasons
of the believ-
ing Jews.

the coming of the Messiah, who should instruct mankind in a more perfect mode of faith and of worship : ¹⁵ *that* the Messiah himself, and his disciples who conversed with him on earth, instead of authorising by their example the most minute observances of the Mosaic law, ¹⁶ would have published to the world the abolition of those useless and obsolete ceremonies, without suffering Christianity to remain during so many years obscurely confounded among the sects of the Jewish church. Arguments like these appear to have been used in the defence of the expiring cause of the Mosaic law ; but the industry of our learned divines has abundantly explained the ambiguous language of the Old Testament, and the ambiguous conduct of the apostolic teachers. It was proper gradually to unfold the system of the Gospel, and to pronounce with the utmost caution and tenderness a sentence of condemnation so repugnant to the inclination and prejudices of the believing Jews.

The history of the church of Jerusalem affords a lively proof of the necessity of those precautions, and of the deep impression which the Jewish religion had made on the minds of its sectaries. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews ; and the congregation over which they presided united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ. ¹⁷ It was natural that the primitive tradition of a church which was founded only forty days after the death of Christ, and was governed almost as many years under the immediate inspection of his apostle, should be received as the standard of orthodoxy. ¹⁸ The distant churches very frequently appealed to the authority of their venerable Parent, and relieved her distresses by a liberal contribution of alms. But when numerous and opulent societies were established in the great cities of the empire, in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, the reverence which Jerusalem had inspired to all the Christian colonies insensibly diminished. The Jewish converts, or, as they were afterwards called, the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church, soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing

¹⁵ These arguments were urged with great ingenuity by the Jew Orobio, and refuted with equal ingenuity and candour by the Christian Limborch. See the *Amica Colatio* (it well deserves that name), or account of the dispute between them.

¹⁶ Jesus - - circumciscus erat; cibis utebatur Judaicis; vestitū simili; purgatos scabie mittebat ad sacerdotes; Paschata et alios dies festos religiosè observabat: si quos sanavit sabbatho, ostendit non tantum ex lege, sed et ex receptis sententiis, talia opera sabbatho non interdicta. Grotius de Veritate Religionis Christianæ, l. v. c. 7. A little afterwards (c. 12) he expatiates on the condescension of the apostles.

¹⁷ Pene omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31. See Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. iv. c. 5.

¹⁸ Mosheim de Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum Magnum, p. 153. In this masterly performance, which I shall often have occasion to quote, he enters much more fully into the state of the primitive church than he has an opportunity of doing in his General History.

multitudes that from all the various religions of polytheism enlisted under the banner of Christ: and the Gentiles, who, with the approbation of their peculiar apostle, had rejected the intolerable weight of Mosaic ceremonies, at length refused to their more scrupulous brethren the same toleration which at first they had humbly solicited for their own practice. The ruin of the temple, of the city, and of the public religion of the Jews, was severely felt by the Nazarenes; as in their manners, though not in their faith, they maintained so intimate a connection with their impious countrymen, whose misfortunes were attributed by the Pagans to the contempt, and more justly ascribed by the Christians to the wrath, of the Supreme Deity: The Nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem^a to the little town of Pella beyond the Jordan, where that ancient church languished above sixty years in solitude and obscurity.¹⁹ They still enjoyed the comfort of making frequent and devout visits to the *Holy City*, and the hope of being one day restored to those seats which both nature and religion taught them to love as well as to revere. But at length, under the reign of Hadrian, the desperate fanaticism of the Jews filled up the measure of their calamities; and the Romans, exasperated by their repeated rebellions, exercised the rights of victory with unusual rigour. The emperor founded, under the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, a new city on Mount Sion,²⁰ to which he gave the privileges of a colony; and denouncing the severest penalties against any of the Jewish people who should dare to approach its precincts, he fixed a vigilant garrison of a Roman cohort to enforce the execution of his orders. The Nazarenes had only one way left to escape the common proscription, and the force of truth was on this occasion assisted by the influence of temporal advantages. They elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the Gentiles, and most probably a native either of Italy or of some of the Latin provinces. At his persuasion the most considerable part of the congregation renounced the Mosaic law, in the practice of which they had persevered above a century. By this sacrifice of their habits and prejudices they purchased a free admission into the

¹⁹ Eusebius, l. iii. c. 5. Le Clerc, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 605. During this occasional absence, the bishop and church of Pella still retained the title of Jerusalem. In the same manner, the Roman pontiffs resided seventy years at Avignon; and the patriarchs of Alexandria have long since transferred their episcopal seat to Cairo.

²⁰ Dion Cassius, l. lxix. [c. 12.] The exile of the Jewish nation from Jerusalem is attested by Aristo of Pella (apud Euseb. l. iv. c. 6), and is mentioned by several ecclesiastical writers; though some of them too hastily extend this interdiction to the whole country of Palestine.

^a This is incorrect: all the traditions concur in placing the abandonment of the city by the Christians, not only before it was in ruins, but before the siege had commenced. Euseb. loc. cit., and Le Clerc —M.

colony of Hadrian, and more firmly cemented their union with the Catholic church.²¹

When the name and honours of the church of Jerusalem had been restored to Mount Sion, the crimes of heresy and schism ^{The} Ebionites, were imputed to the obscure remnant of the Nazarenes which refused to accompany their Latin bishop. They still preserved their former habitation of Pella, spread themselves into the villages adjacent to Damascus, and formed an inconsiderable church in the city of Beroëa, or, as it is now called, of Aleppo, in Syria.²² The name of Nazarenes was deemed too nonourable for those Christian Jews, and they soon received, from the supposed poverty of their understanding, as well as of their condition, the contemptuous epithet of Ebionites.²³ In a few years after the return of the church of Jerusalem, it became a matter of doubt and controversy whether a man who sincerely acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, but who still continued to observe the law of Moses, could possibly hope for salvation. The humane temper of Justin Martyr inclined him to answer this question in the affirmative; and though he expressed himself with the most guarded diffidence, he ventured to determine in favour of such an imperfect Christian, if he were content to practise the Mosaic ceremonies without pretending to assert their general use or necessity. But when Justin was pressed to declare the sentiment of the church, he confessed that there were very many among the orthodox Christians who not only excluded their Judaizing brethren from the hope of salvation, but who declined any intercourse with them in the common offices of friendship, hospitality, and social life.²⁴

²¹ Eusebius, l. iv. c. 6. Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31. By comparing their unsatisfactory accounts, Mosheim (p. 327, &c.) has drawn out a very distinct representation of the circumstances and motives of this revolution.

²² Le Clerc (Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 477, 535) seems to have collected from Eusebius, Jerome, Epiphanius, and other writers, all the principal circumstances that relate to the Nazarenes or Ebionites. The nature of their opinions soon divided them into a stricter and a milder sect; and there is some reason to conjecture that the family of Jesus Christ remained members, at least, of the latter and more moderate party.

²³ Some writers have been pleased to create an Ebion, the imaginary author of their sect and name. But we can more safely rely on the learned Eusebius than on the vehement Tertullian, or the credulous Epiphanius. According to Le Clerc, the Hebrew word *Ebyonim* may be translated into Latin by that of *Pauperes*. See Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 477.^a

²⁴ See the very curious Dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Tryphon.^b The conference between them was held at Ephesus, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and about twenty years after the return of the church of Pella to Jerusalem. For this date consult the accurate note of Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. ii. p. 511.

^a The opinion of Le Clerc is generally admitted, but Neander has suggested some good reasons for supposing that this term only applied to poverty of condition. The obscure history of their tenets and divisions is clearly and rationally traced in his His-

tory of the Church, vol. i. part ii. p. 612, &c., Germ. edit.—M.

^b Justin Martyr makes an important distinction, which Gibbon has neglected to notice. * * * There were some who were not content with observing the Mosaic

The more rigorous opinion prevailed, as it was natural to expect, over the milder; and an eternal bar of separation was fixed between the disciples of Moses and those of Christ. The unfortunate Ebionites, rejected from one religion as apostates, and from the other as heretics, found themselves compelled to assume a more decided character; and although some traces of that obsolete sect may be discovered as late as the fourth century, they insensibly melted away either into the church or the synagogue.²⁵

While the orthodox church preserved a just medium between excessive veneration and improper contempt for the law of Moses, the various heretics deviated into equal but opposite extremes of error and extravagance. From the acknowledged truth of the Jewish religion, the Ebionites had concluded that it could never be abolished. From its supposed imperfections, the Gnostics as hastily inferred that it never was instituted by the wisdom of the Deity. There are some objections against the authority of Moses and the prophets which too readily present themselves to the sceptical mind; though they can only be derived from our ignorance of remote antiquity, and from our incapacity to form an adequate judgment of the Divine economy. These objections were eagerly embraced and as petulantly urged by the vain science of the Gnostics.²⁶ As those heretics were, for the most part, averse to the pleasures of sense, they morosely arraigned the polygamy of the patriarchs, the gallantries of David, and the seraglio of Solomon. The conquest of the land of Canaan, and the extirpation of the unsuspecting natives, they were at a loss how to reconcile with the common notions of humanity and justice.^a But when they recollected the sanguinary list of murders, of executions, and of massacres, which stain almost every page of the

The
Gnostics.

²⁵ Of all the systems of Christianity, that of Abyssinia is the only one which still adheres to the Mosaic rites (Geddes's Church History of Æthiopia, and Dissertations de La Grand sur la Relation du P. Lobo). The eunuch of the queen Candace might suggest some suspicions; but as we are assured (Socrates, i. 19; Sozomen, ii. 24; Ludolphus, p. 281) that the Æthiopians were not converted till the fourth century, it is more reasonable to believe that they respected the sabbath, and distinguished the forbidden meats, in imitation of the Jews, who, in a very early period, were seated on both sides of the Red Sea. Circumcision had been practised by the most ancient Æthiopians, from motives of health and cleanliness, which seem to be explained in the Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains, tom. ii. p. 117.

²⁶ Beausobre, Histoire du Manichéisme, l. i. c. 3, has stated their objections, particularly those of Faustus, the adversary of Augustin, with the most learned impartiality.

law themselves, but enforced the same observance, as necessary to salvation, upon the heathen converts, and refused all social intercourse with them if they did not conform to the law. Justin Martyr himself freely admits those who kept the law themselves to Christian communion, though he acknowledges that some, not the Church,

thought otherwise; of the other party he himself thought less favourably—*ἐμοῦς καὶ τοῦτοις οὐκ ἀποδέχονται*. The former by some are considered the Nazarenes, the latter the Ebionites.—G. and M.

^a On the "war law" of the Jews, see Hist. of Jews, i. 137.—M.

Jewish annals, they acknowledged that the barbarians of Palestine had exercised as much compassion towards their idolatrous enemies as they had ever shown to their friends or countrymen.²⁷ Passing from the sectaries of the law to the law itself, they asserted that it was impossible that a religion which consisted only of bloody sacrifices and trifling ceremonies, and whose rewards as well as punishments were all of a carnal and temporal nature, could inspire the love of virtue, or restrain the impetuosity of passion. The Mosaic account of the creation and fall of man was treated with profane derision by the Gnostics, who would not listen with patience to the repose of the Deity after six days' labour, to the rib of Adam, the garden of Eden, the trees of life and of knowledge, the speaking serpent, the forbidden fruit, and the condemnation pronounced against human kind for the venial offence of their first progenitors.²⁸ The God of Israel was impiously represented by the Gnostics as a being liable to passion and to error, capricious in his favour, implacable in his resentment, meanly jealous of his superstitious worship, and confining his partial providence to a single people, and to this transitory life. In such a character they could discover none of the features of the wise and omnipotent Father of the universe.²⁹ They allowed that the religion of the Jews was somewhat less criminal than the idolatry of the Gentiles: but it was their fundamental doctrine that the Christ whom they adored as the first and brightest emanation of the Deity appeared upon earth to rescue mankind from their various errors, and to reveal a *new* system of truth and perfection. The most learned of the fathers, by a very singular condescension, have imprudently admitted the sophistry of the Gnostics.^b Acknowledging

²⁷ Apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu: adversus omnes alios hostile odium. Tacit. Hist. v. 5. Surely Tacitus had seen the Jews with too favourable an eye.^a The perusal of Josephus must have destroyed the antithesis.

²⁸ Dr. Burnet (Archæologia, l. ii. c. 7) has discussed the first chapters of Genesis with too much wit and freedom.

²⁹ The milder Gnostics considered Jehovah, the Creator, as a Being of a mixed nature between God and the Dæmon. Others confounded him with the evil principle. Consult the second century of the general history of Mosheim, which gives a very distinct, though concise, account of their strange opinions on this subject.

^a Few writers have suspected Tacitus of partiality towards the Jews. The whole later history of the Jews illustrates as well their strong feelings of humanity to their brethren, as their hostility to the rest of mankind. The character and the position of Josephus with the Roman authorities must be kept in mind during the perusal of his History. Perhaps he has not exaggerated the ferocity and fanaticism of the Jews at that time; but insurrectionary warfare is not the best school for the humaner virtues, and much must

be allowed for the grinding tyranny of the later Roman governors. See Hist. of Jews, ii. 254.—M.

^b The Gnostics, and the historian who has stated these plausible objections with so much force as almost to make them his own, would have shown a more considerate and not less reasonable philosophy, if they had considered the religion of Moses with reference to the age in which it was promulgated; if they had done justice to its sublime as well as its more imperfect views of the divine nature; the humane and

that the literal sense is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason, they deem themselves secure and invulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory, which they carefully spread over every tender part of the Mosaic dispensation.³⁰

It has been remarked with more ingenuity than truth that the virgin purity of the church was never violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ.³¹ We may ob-

Their sects,
progress, and
influence.

serve with much more propriety, that, during that period, the disciples of the Messiah were indulged in a freer latitude both of faith and practice than has ever been allowed in succeeding ages. As the terms of communion were insensibly narrowed, and the spiritual authority of the prevailing party was exercised with increasing severity, many of its most respectable adherents, who were called upon to renounce, were provoked to assert their private opinions, to pursue the consequences of their mistaken principles, and openly to erect the standard of rebellion against the unity of the church. The Gnostics were distinguished as the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy of the Christian name; and that general appellation, which expressed a superiority of knowledge, was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically bestowed by the envy of their adversaries. They were almost without exception of the race of the Gentiles, and their principal founders seem to have been natives of Syria or Egypt, where the warmth of the climate disposes both the mind and the body to indolent and contemplative devotion. The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which they derived from oriental philosophy, and even from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eternity of matter, the existence of two principles, and the mysterious hierarchy of the invisible world.³² As soon as they launched out into that vast abyss, they delivered themselves to the guidance of a disordered imagination; and as the paths of error are various and infinite, the Gnostics were

³⁰ See Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, l. i. c. 4. Origen and St. Augustin were among the allegorists.

³¹ Hegesippus, ap. Euseb. l. iii. 32; iv. 22. Clemens Alexandrin. *Stromat.* vii. 17.^a

³² In the account of the Gnostics of the second and third centuries, Mosheim is ingenious and candid; Le Clerc dull, but exact; Beausobre almost always an apologist; and it is much to be feared that the primitive fathers are very frequently calumniators.^b

civilising provisions of the Hebrew law, as well as those adapted for an infant and barbarous people. See *Hist. of Jews*, i. 36, 37, &c.—M.

^a The assertion of Hegesippus is not so positive: it is sufficient to read the whole passage in Eusebius to see that the former part is modified by the latter. Hegesippus

adds that up to this period the church had remained pure and immaculate as a virgin. Those who laboured to corrupt the doctrines of the Gospel worked as yet in obscurity.—G.

^b The *Histoire du Gnosticisme* of M. Matter is at once the fairest and most complete account of these sects.—M.

imperceptibly divided into more than fifty particular sects,³³ of whom the most celebrated appear to have been the Basilidians, the Valentinians, the Marcionites, and, in a still later period, the Manichæans. Each of these sects could boast of its bishops and congregations, of its doctors and martyrs;³⁴ and, instead of the Four Gospels adopted by the church,^a the heretics produced a multitude of histories, in which the actions and discourses of Christ and of his apostles were adapted to their respective tenets.³⁵ The success of the Gnostics was rapid and extensive.³⁶ They covered Asia and Egypt, established themselves in Rome, and sometimes penetrated into the provinces of the West. For the most part they arose in the second century, flourished during the third, and were suppressed in the fourth or fifth, by the prevalence of more fashionable controversies, and by the superior ascendant of the reigning power. Though they constantly disturbed the peace, and frequently disgraced the name, of religion, they contributed to assist rather than to retard the progress of Christianity. The Gentile converts, whose strongest objections and prejudices were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many Christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged, and the church was ultimately benefited by the conquests of its most inveterate enemies.³⁷

³³ See the catalogues of Irenæus and Epiphanius. It must indeed be allowed that those writers were inclined to multiply the number of sects which opposed the *unity* of the church.

³⁴ Eusebius, l. iv. c. 15. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 32. See in Bayle, in the article of *Marcion*, a curious detail of a dispute on that subject. It should seem that some of the Gnostics (the Basilidians) declined, and even refused, the honour of martyrdom. Their reasons were singular and abstruse. See Mosheim, p. 539.

³⁵ See a very remarkable passage of Origen (*Proem. ad Lucam.*). That indefatigable writer, who had consumed his life in the study of the Scriptures, relies for their authenticity on the inspired authority of the church. It was impossible that the Gnostics could receive our present Gospels, many parts of which (particularly in the resurrection of Christ) are directly, and as it might seem designedly, pointed against their favourite tenets. It is therefore somewhat singular that Ignatius (*Epist. ad Smyrn. Patr. Apostol. tom. ii. p. 34*) should choose to employ a vague and doubtful tradition, instead of quoting the certain testimony of the evangelists.^b

³⁶ *Faciunt favos et vespe; faciunt ecclesias et Marcionitæ*, is the strong expression of Tertullian, which I am obliged to quote from memory. [*Adv. Marcion. iv. 5.*] In the time of Epiphanius (*advers. Hæreses*, p. 302 [ed. Paris, 1622]) the Marcionites were very numerous in Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, and Persia.

³⁷ Augustin is a memorable instance of this gradual progress from reason to faith. He was, during several years, engaged in the Manichæan sect.

^a M. Hahn has restored the Marcionite Gospel with great ingenuity. His work is reprinted in Thilo, *Codex Apoc. Nov. Test. vol. i.*—M.

^b Bishop Pearson has attempted very happily to explain this "singularity." The first Christians were acquainted with a number of sayings of Jesus Christ, which are not related in our Gospels, and indeed

have never been written. Why might not St. Ignatius, who had lived with the Apostles or their disciples, repeat in other words that which St. Luke has related, particularly at a time when, being in prison, he could not have had the Gospels at hand! Pearson, *Vind. Ign.* p. 2, 9; p. 396, in tom. ii. *Patres Apost. ed. Cotelier.*—G.

But whatever difference of opinion might subsist between the Orthodox, the Ebionites, and the Gnostics, concerning the divinity or the obligation of the Mosaic law, they were all equally animated by the same exclusive zeal, and by the same abhorrence for idolatry, which had distinguished the Jews from the other nations of the ancient world. The philosopher, who considered the system of polytheism as a composition of human fraud and error, could disguise a smile of contempt under the mask of devotion, without apprehending that either the mockery or the compliance would expose him to the resentment of any invisible, or, as he conceived them, imaginary powers. But the established religions of Paganism were seen by the primitive Christians in a much more odious and formidable light. It was the universal sentiment both of the church and of heretics, that the dæmons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry.³⁸ Those rebellious spirits who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and cast down into the infernal pit, were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies and to seduce the minds of sinful men. The dæmons soon discovered and abused the natural propensity of the human heart towards devotion, and, artfully withdrawing the adoration of mankind from their Creator, they usurped the place and honours of the Supreme Deity. By the success of their malicious contrivances, they at once gratified their own vanity and revenge, and obtained the only comfort of which they were yet susceptible, the hope of involving the human species in the participation of their guilt and misery. It was confessed, or at least it was imagined, that they had distributed among themselves the most important characters of polytheism, one dæmon assuming the name and attributes of Jupiter, another of Æsculapius, a third of Venus, and a fourth perhaps of Apollo;³⁹ and that, by the advantage of their long experience and ærial nature, they were enabled to execute, with sufficient skill and dignity, the parts which they had undertaken. They lurked in the temples, instituted festivals and sacrifices, invented fables, pronounced oracles, and were frequently allowed to perform miracles. The Christians, who, by the interposition of evil spirits, could so readily explain every præternatural appearance, were disposed and even desirous to admit the most extravagant fictions of the Pagan mythology. But the belief of the Christian was accompanied with horror. The most trifling mark of respect to the national worship he considered as a

The dæmons
considered as
the gods of
antiquity.

³⁸ The unanimous sentiment of the primitive church is very clearly explained by Justin Martyr, *Apolog. Major* [c. 25, p. 59, ed. Bened.]; by Athenagoras, *Legat. c. 22, &c.*; and by Lactantius, *Institut. Divin. ii. 14-19.*

³⁹ Tertullian (*Apolog. c. 23*) alleges the confession of the dæmons themselves as often as they were tormented by the Christian exorcists.

direct homage yielded to the *dæmon*, and as an act of rebellion against the majesty of God.

In consequence of this opinion, it was the first but arduous duty of a Christian to preserve himself pure and undefiled by the practice of idolatry. The religion of the nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind, and all the offices and amusements of society.⁴⁰ The important transactions of peace and war were prepared or concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, were obliged to preside or to participate.⁴¹ The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the Pagans, and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honour of their peculiar festivals.⁴² The Christian, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness.⁴³ When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymenæal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation,⁴⁴ or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile,⁴⁵ the Christian, on these interesting occasions, was compelled to desert the persons who were the dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to those impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the

Abhorrence
of the Chris-
tians for
idolatry.

Ceremonies.

Arts.

⁴⁰ Tertullian has written a most severe treatise against idolatry, to caution his brethren against the hourly danger of incurring that guilt. *Recogita silvam, et quantæ latitant spinæ. De Coronâ Militis*, c. 10.

⁴¹ The Roman senate was always held in a temple or consecrated place (Aulus Gellius, xiv. 7). Before they entered on business, every senator dropped some wine and frankincense on the altar. Sueton. in August. c. 35.

⁴² See Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*. This severe reformer shows no more indulgence to a tragedy of Euripides than to a combat of gladiators. The dress of the actors particularly offends him. By the use of the lofty buskin they impiously strive to add a cubit to their stature; c. 23.

⁴³ The ancient practice of concluding the entertainment with libations may be found in every classic. Socrates and Seneca, in their last moments, made a noble application of this custom. *Postremo stagnum calidæ aquæ introiit, respergens proximos servorum, additâ voce, libare se liquorem illum Jovi Liberatori. Tacit. Annal. xv. 64.*

⁴⁴ See the elegant but idolatrous hymn of Catullus on the nuptials of Manlius and Julia. *O Hymen, Hymenæe Iô! Quis huic Deo comparariet ausit?*

⁴⁵ The ancient funerals (in those of Misenus and Pallas) are no less accurately described by Virgil than they are illustrated by his commentator Servius. The pile itself was an altar, the flames were fed with the blood of victims, and all the assistants were sprinkled with lustral water.

framing or adorning of idols was polluted by the stain of idolatry ;⁴⁶ a severe sentence, since it devoted to eternal misery the far greater part of the community which is employed in the exercise of liberal or mechanic professions. If we cast our eyes over the numerous remains of antiquity, we shall perceive that, besides the immediate representations of the gods and the holy instruments of their worship, the elegant forms and agreeable fictions consecrated by the imagination of the Greeks were introduced as the richest ornaments of the houses, the dress, and the furniture of the Pagans.⁴⁷ Even the arts of music and painting, of eloquence and poetry, flowed from the same impure origin. In the style of the fathers, Apollo and the Muses were the organs of the infernal spirit ; Homer and Virgil were the most eminent of his servants ; and the beautiful mythology which pervades and animates the compositions of their genius is destined to celebrate the glory of the dæmons. Even the common language of Greece and Rome abounded with familiar but impious expressions, which the imprudent Christian might too carelessly utter, or too patiently hear.⁴⁸

The dangerous temptations which on every side lurked in ambush to surprise the unguarded believer assailed him with redoubled violence on the days of solemn festivals. So art-^{Festivals.} fully were they framed and disposed throughout the year, that superstition always wore the appearance of pleasure, and often of virtue.⁴⁹ Some of the most sacred festivals in the Roman ritual were destined to salute the new calends of January with vows of public and private felicity ; to indulge the pious remembrance of the dead and living ; to ascertain the inviolable bounds of property ; to hail, on the return of spring, the genial powers of fecundity ; to perpetuate the two memorable æras of Rome, the foundation of the city, and that of the republic ; and to restore, during the humane licence of the

⁴⁶ Tertullian de Idololatria, c. 11.^a

⁴⁷ See every part of Montfaucon's Antiquities. Even the reverses of the Greek and Roman coins were frequently of an idolatrous nature. Here, indeed, the scruples of the Christian were suspended by a stronger passion.^b

⁴⁸ Tertullian de Idololatria, c. 20, 21, 22. If a Pagan friend (on the occasion perhaps of sneezing) used the familiar expression of "Jupiter bless you," the Christian was obliged to protest against the divinity of Jupiter.

⁴⁹ Consult the most laboured work of Ovid, his imperfect *Fasti*. He finished no more than the first six months of the year. The compilation of Macrobius is called the *Saturnalia*, but it is only a small part of the first book that bears any relation to the title.

^a The exaggerated and declamatory opinions of Tertullian ought not to be taken as the general sentiment of the early Christians. Gibbon has too often allowed himself to consider the peculiar notions of certain Fathers of the Church as inherent

in Christianity. This is not accurate. —G.

^b All this scrupulous nicety is at variance with the decision of St. Paul about meat offered to idols, 1 Cor. x. 21 to 32. —M.

Saturnalia, the primitive equality of mankind. Some idea may be conceived of the abhorrence of the Christians for such impious ceremonies, by the scrupulous delicacy which they displayed on a much less alarming occasion. On days of general festivity it was the custom of the ancients to adorn their doors with lamps and with branches of laurel, and to crown their heads with a garland of flowers. This innocent and elegant practice might perhaps have been tolerated as a mere civil institution. But it most unluckily happened that the doors were under the protection of the household gods, that the laurel was sacred to the lover of Daphne, and that garlands of flowers, though frequently worn as a symbol either of joy or mourning, had been dedicated in their first origin to the service of superstition. The trembling Christians, who were persuaded in this instance to comply with the fashion of their country and the commands of the magistrate, laboured under the most gloomy apprehensions, from the reproaches of their own conscience, the censures of the church, and the denunciations of divine vengeance.⁵⁰

Such was the anxious diligence which was required to guard the chastity of the Gospel from the infectious breath of idolatry. Zeal for Christianity. The superstitious observances of public or private rites were carelessly practised, from education and habit, by the followers of the established religion. But as often as they occurred, they afforded the Christians an opportunity of declaring and confirming their zealous opposition. By these frequent protestations their attachment to the faith was continually fortified; and in proportion to the increase of zeal, they combated with the more ardour and success in the holy war which they had undertaken against the empire of the dæmons.

II. The writings of Cicero⁵¹ represent in the most lively colours the ignorance, the errors, and the uncertainty of the ancient philosophers with regard to the immortality of the soul. When they are desirous of arming their disciples against the fear of death, they inculcate, as an obvious, though melancholy position, that the fatal stroke of our dissolution releases us from the calamities of life; and that those can no longer suffer who no longer exist. Yet there were a few sages of Greece and Rome who had conceived a more exalted, and, in

⁵⁰ Tertullian has composed a defence, or rather panegyric, of the rash action of a Christian soldier, who, by throwing away his crown of laurel, had exposed himself and his brethren to the most imminent danger. By the mention of the *emperors* (Severus and Caracalla) it is evident, notwithstanding the wishes of M. de Tillemont, that Tertullian composed his treatise *De Coronâ* long before he was engaged in the errors of the Montanists. See *Mémoires Ecclésiastiques*, tom. iii. p. 384.

⁵¹ In particular, the first book of the *Tusculan Questions*, and the treatise *De Senectute*, and the *Somnium Scipionis*, contain, in the most beautiful language, everything that Grecian philosophy or Roman good sense could possibly suggest on this dark but important object.

some respects, a juster idea of human nature, though it must be confessed that, in the sublime inquiry, their reason had been often guided by their imagination, and that their imagination had been prompted by their vanity. When they viewed with complacency the extent of their own mental powers, when they exercised the various faculties of memory, of fancy, and of judgment, in the most profound speculations or the most important labours, and when they reflected on the desire of fame, which transported them into future ages, far beyond the bounds of death and of the grave, they were unwilling to confound themselves with the beasts of the field, or to suppose that a being, for whose dignity they entertained the most sincere admiration, could be limited to a spot of earth, and to a few years of duration. With this favourable prepossession they summoned to their aid the science, or rather the language, of Metaphysics. They soon discovered that, as none of the properties of matter will apply to the operations of the mind, the human soul must consequently be a substance distinct from the body, pure, simple, and spiritual, incapable of dissolution, and susceptible of a much higher degree of virtue and happiness after the release from its corporeal prison. From these specious and noble principles the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted, not only the future immortality, but the past eternity of the human soul, which they were too apt to consider as a portion of the infinite and self-existing spirit which pervades and sustains the universe.⁵² A doctrine thus removed beyond the senses and the experience of mankind might serve to amuse the leisure of a philosophic mind; or, in the silence of solitude, it might sometimes impart a ray of comfort to desponding virtue; but the faint impression which had been received in the schools was soon obliterated by the commerce and business of active life. We are sufficiently acquainted with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero and of the first Cæsars, with their actions, their characters, and their motives, to be assured that their conduct in this life was never regulated by any serious conviction of the rewards or punishments of a future state. At the bar and in the senate of Rome the ablest orators were not apprehensive of giving offence to their hearers by exposing that doctrine as an idle and extravagant opinion, which was rejected with contempt by every man of a liberal education and understanding.⁵³

⁵² The pre-existence of human souls, so far at least as that doctrine is compatible with religion, was adopted by many of the Greek and Latin fathers. See Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, l. vi. c. 4.

⁵³ See Cicero pro Cluent. c. 61. Cæsar ap. Sallust. de Bell. Catilin. c. 51. Juvenal. Satir. ii. 149.

Esse aliquid manes, et subterranea regna,

Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum ære lavantur.

Since therefore the most sublime efforts of philosophy can extend no farther than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or, at most, the probability, of a future state, there is nothing, except a divine revelation, that can ascertain the existence, and describe the condition, of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body. But we may perceive several defects inherent to the popular religions of Greece and Rome, which rendered them very unequal to so arduous a task. 1. The general system of their mythology was unsupported by any solid proofs; and the wisest among the Pagans had already disclaimed its usurped authority. 2. The description of the infernal regions had been abandoned to the fancy of painters and of poets, who peopled them with so many phantoms and monsters, who dispensed their rewards and punishments with so little equity, that a solemn truth, the most congenial to the human heart, was oppressed and disgraced by the absurd mixture of the wildest fictions.⁵⁴ 3. The doctrine of a future state was scarcely considered among the devout polytheists of Greece and Rome as a fundamental article of faith. The providence of the gods, as it related to public communities rather than to private individuals, was principally displayed on the visible theatre of the present world. The petitions which were offered on the altars of Jupiter or Apollo expressed the anxiety of their worshippers for temporal happiness, and their ignorance or indifference concerning a future life.⁵⁵ The important truth of the immortality of the soul was inculcated with more diligence as well as success in India, in Assyria, in Egypt, and in Gaul; and since we cannot attribute such a difference to the superior knowledge of the barbarians, we must ascribe it to the influence of an established priesthood, which employed the motives of virtue as the instrument of ambition.⁵⁶

We might naturally expect that a principle so essential to religion would have been revealed in the clearest terms to the chosen people of Palestine, and that it might safely have been

⁵⁴ The xith book of the *Odyssey* gives a very dreary and incoherent account of the infernal shades. Pindar and Virgil have embellished the picture; but even those poets, though more correct than their great model, are guilty of very strange inconsistencies. See Bayle, *Responses aux Questions d'un Provincial*, part iii. c. 22.

⁵⁵ See the xvth epistle of the first book of Horace, the xiiiith Satire of Juvenal, and the iind Satire of Persius: these popular discourses express the sentiment and language of the multitude.

⁵⁶ If we confine ourselves to the Gauls, we may observe that they intrusted, not only their lives, but even their money, to the security of another world. *Vetus ille mos Gallorum occurrit* (says Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 6, § 10) *quos, memoria proditum est, pecunias mutuas, quæ his apud inferos redderentur, dare solitos*. The same custom is more darkly insinuated by Mela, l. iii. c. 2. It is almost needless to add that the profits of trade hold a just proportion to the credit of the merchant, and that the Druids derived from their holy profession a character of responsibility which could scarcely be claimed by any other order of men.

intrusted to the hereditary priesthood of Aaron. It is incumbent on us to adore the mysterious dispensations of Providence,⁵⁷ when we discover that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is omitted in the law of Moses; it is darkly insinuated by the prophets; and during the long period which elapsed between the Egyptian and the Babylonian servitudes, the hopes as well as fears of the Jews appear to have been confined within the narrow compass of the present life.⁵⁸ After Cyrus had permitted the exiled nation to return into the promised land, and after Ezra had restored the ancient records of their religion, two celebrated sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees,

⁵⁷ The right reverend author of the Divine Legation of Moses assigns a very curious reason for the omission, and most ingeniously retorts it on the unbelievers.^a

⁵⁸ See Le Clerc (*Prolegomena ad Hist. Ecclesiast.* sect. 1, c. 8). His authority seems to carry the greater weight, as he has written a learned and judicious commentary on the books of the Old Testament.

^a The hypothesis of Warburton concerning this remarkable fact, which, as far as the *Law of Moses*, is unquestionable, made few disciples; and it is difficult to suppose that it could be intended by the author himself for more than a display of intellectual strength. Modern writers have accounted in various ways for the silence of the Hebrew legislator on the immortality of the soul. According to Michaelis, "Moses wrote as an historian and as a lawgiver; he regulated the ecclesiastical discipline rather than the religious belief of his people; and the sanctions of the law being temporal, he had no occasion, and as a civil legislator could not with propriety, threaten punishments in another world." See Michaelis, *Laws of Moses*, art. 272, vol. iv. p. 209, Eng. trans.; and *Synagma Commentationum*, p. 80, quoted by Guizot. M. Guizot adds the "ingenious conjecture of a philosophic theologian," which approximates to an opinion long entertained by the editor. That writer believes that, in the state of civilisation at the time of the legislator, this doctrine, become popular among the Jews, would necessarily have given birth to a multitude of idolatrous superstitions which he wished to prevent. His primary object was to establish a firm theocracy, to make his people the conservators of the doctrine of the Divine Unity, the basis upon which Christianity was hereafter to rest. He carefully excluded everything which could obscure or weaken that doctrine. Other nations had strangely abused their notions on the immortality of the soul; Moses wished to prevent this abuse: hence he forbade the Jews from consulting necromancers (those who evoke the spirits of the dead). Deut. xviii. 11. Those who reflect on the state of the Pagans and of the

Jews, and on the facility with which idolatry crept in on every side, will not be astonished that Moses has not developed a doctrine of which the influence might be more pernicious than useful to his people. *Orat. Fest. de Vitæ Immort. Spe &c.* auct. Ph. Alb. Stapfer, p. 12, 13, 20, Berne, 1787.

Moses, as well from the intimations scattered in his writings, the passage relating to the translation of Enoch (*Gen.* v. 24), the prohibition of necromancy (Michaelis believes him to be the author of the Book of Job, though this opinion is in general rejected; other learned writers consider this Book to be coeval with and known to Moses), as from his long residence in Egypt, and his acquaintance with Egyptian wisdom, could not be ignorant of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. But this doctrine, if popularly known among the Jews, must have been purely Egyptian, and, as so, intimately connected with the whole religious system of that country. It was, no doubt, moulded up with the tenet of the transmigration of the soul, perhaps with notions analogous to the emanation system of India, in which the human soul was an efflux from, or indeed a part of, the Deity. The Mosaic religion drew a wide and impassable interval between the Creator and created human beings: in this it differed from the Egyptian and all the Eastern religions. As then the immortality of the soul was thus inseparably blended with those foreign religions which were altogether to be effaced from the minds of the people, and by no means necessary for the establishment of the theocracy, Moses maintained silence on this point, and a purer notion of it was left to be developed at a more favourable period in the history of man —M.

insensibly arose at Jerusalem.⁵⁹ The former, selected from the more opulent and distinguished ranks of society, were strictly attached to the literal sense of the Mosaic law, and they piously rejected the immortality of the soul, as an opinion that received no countenance from the divine book, which they revered as the only rule of their faith. To the authority of Scripture the Pharisees added that of tradition, and they accepted, under the name of traditions, several speculative tenets from the philosophy or religion of the eastern nations. The doctrines of fate or predestination, of angels and spirits, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, were in the number of these new articles of belief; and as the Pharisees, by the austerity of their manners, had drawn into their party the body of the Jewish people, the immortality of the soul became the prevailing sentiment of the synagogue under the reign of the Asmonæan princes and pontiffs. The temper of the Jews was incapable of contenting itself with such a cold and languid assent as might satisfy the mind of a Polytheist; and as soon as they admitted the idea of a future state, they embraced it with the zeal which has always formed the characteristic of the nation. Their zeal, however, added nothing to its evidence, or even probability: and it was still necessary that the doctrine of life and immortality, which had been dictated by nature, approved by reason, and received by superstition, should obtain the sanction of divine truth from the authority and example of Christ.

When the promise of eternal happiness was proposed to mankind on condition of adopting the faith, and of observing the precepts, of the Gospel, it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman empire. The ancient Christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality, of which the doubtful and imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give us any adequate notion. In the primitive church the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed that the end of the world, and the kingdom of heaven, were at hand.^a

among the
Christians.

Approaching
end of the
world.

⁵⁹ Joseph. *Antiquitat.* l. xiii. c. 10 [§ 5, sq.]; De Bell. Jud. ii. 8 [§ 2]. According to the most natural interpretation of his words, the Sadducees admitted only the Pentateuch; but it has pleased some modern critics to add the Prophets to their creed, and to suppose that they contented themselves with rejecting the traditions of the Pharisees. Dr. Jortin has argued that point in his *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii. p. 103.

^a This was, in fact, an integral part of the Jewish notion of the Messiah, from which the minds of the Apostles themselves were but gradually detached. See Bertholdt, *Christologia Judæorum*, concluding chapters.—M.

The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld his humble condition upon earth, and which might still be witness of the calamities of the Jews under Vespasian or Hadrian. The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation; but as long as, for wise purposes, this error was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians, who lived in the awful expectation of that moment when the globe itself, and all the various race of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their divine Judge.⁶⁰

The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration Doctrine of the Millennium. in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years.⁶¹ By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and

⁶⁰ This expectation was countenanced by the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and by the first epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. Erasmus removes the difficulty by the help of allegory and metaphor; and the learned Grotius ventures to insinuate, that, for wise purposes, the pious deception was permitted to take place.^a

⁶¹ See Burnet's Sacred Theory, part iii. c. 5. This tradition may be traced as high as the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, who wrote in the first century, and who seems to have been half a Jew.^b

^a Some modern theologians explain it without discovering either allegory or deception. They say that Jesus Christ, after having proclaimed the ruin of Jerusalem and of the Temple, speaks of his second coming, and the signs which were to precede it; but those who believed that the moment was near deceived themselves as to the sense of two words, an error which still subsists in our versions of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, xxiv. 29, 34. In verse 29 we read, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened," &c. The Greek word *εὐθὺς* signifies *all at once, suddenly, not immediately*; so that it signifies only the sudden appearance of the signs which Jesus Christ announces, not the shortness of the interval which was to separate them from the "days of tribulation," of which he was speaking. The verse 34 is this: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things shall be fulfilled." Jesus, speaking

to his disciples, uses these words, *ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη*, which the translators have rendered by "this generation," but which means the race, the filiation of my disciples; that is, he speaks of a class of men, not of a generation. The true sense then, according to these learned men, is, "In truth I tell you that this race of men, of which you are the commencement, shall not pass away till this shall take place;" that is to say, the succession of Christians shall not cease till his coming. See Commentary of M. Paulus on the New Test., edit. 1802, tom. iii. p. 445, 446.—G.

Others, as Rosenmüller and Kuinoel, in loc., confine this passage to a highly figurative description of the ruins of the Jewish city and polity.—M.

^b In fact it is purely Jewish. See Mosheim, De Reb. Christ. ii. 8. Lightfoot's Works, 8vo. edit. vol. iii. p. 37 Bertholdt, Christologia Judæorum, ch. 38.—M.

contention, which was now almost elapsed,⁶² would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection. So pleasing was this hope to the mind of believers, that the *New Jerusalem*, the seat of this blissful kingdom, was quickly adorned with all the gayest colours of the imagination. A felicity consisting only of pure and spiritual pleasure would have appeared too refined for its inhabitants, who were still supposed to possess their human nature and senses. A garden of Eden, with the amusements of the pastoral life, was no longer suited to the advanced state of society which prevailed under the Roman empire. A city was therefore erected of gold and precious stones, and a supernatural plenty of corn and wine was bestowed on the adjacent territory; in the free enjoyment of whose spontaneous productions the happy and benevolent people was never to be restrained by any jealous laws of exclusive property.⁶³ The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr⁶⁴ and Irenæus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine.⁶⁵ Though it might not be

⁶² The primitive church of Antioch computed almost 6000 years from the creation of the world to the birth of Christ. Africanus, Lactantius, and the Greek church, have reduced that number to 5500, and Eusebius has contented himself with 5200 years. These calculations were formed on the Septuagint, which was universally received during the six first centuries. The authority of the Vulgate and of the Hebrew text has determined the moderns, Protestants as well as Catholics, to prefer a period of about 4000 years; though, in the study of profane antiquity, they often find themselves straitened by those narrow limits.^a

⁶³ Most of these pictures were borrowed from a misrepresentation of Isaiah, Daniel, and the Apocalypse. One of the grossest images may be found in Irenæus (l. v. [c. 23] p. 455 [ed. Oxon. 1702]), the disciple of Papias, who had seen the apostle St. John.

⁶⁴ See the second dialogue of Justin with Tryphon, and the seventh book of Lactantius. It is unnecessary to allege all the intermediate fathers, as the fact is not disputed. Yet the curious reader may consult Daille de Usu Patrum, l. ii. c. 4.

⁶⁵ The testimony of Justin of his own faith and that of his orthodox brethren, in the doctrine of a Millennium, is delivered in the clearest and most solemn manner (Dialog. cum Tryphonte Jud. p. 177, 178, edit. Benedictin.). If in the beginning of this important passage there is anything like an inconsistency, we may impute it, as we think proper, either to the author or to his transcribers.^b

^a Most of the more learned modern English Protestants, Dr. Hales, Mr. Faber, Dr. Russel, as well as the Continental writers, adopt the larger chronology. There is little doubt that the narrower system was framed by the Jews of Tiberias; it was clearly neither that of St. Paul, nor of Josephus, nor of the Samaritan text. It is greatly to be regretted that the chronology of the earlier Scriptures should ever have been made a religious question. —M.

^b The Millennium is described in what once stood as the XL1st Article of the English Church (see Collier, Eccles. Hist., for Articles of Edw. VI.) as "a fable of Jewish dotage." The whole of these gross and earthly images may be traced in the works which treat on the Jewish traditions, in Lightfoot, Schoetgen, and Eisenmenger; "Das entdeckte Judenthum," t. ii. 809, and briefly in Bertholdt, i. c. 38, 39. — M.

universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith. But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism.⁶⁶ A mysterious prophecy, which still forms a part of the sacred canon, but which was thought to favour the exploded sentiment, has very narrowly escaped the proscription of the church.⁶⁷

Whilst the happiness and glory of a temporal reign were promised to the disciples of Christ, the most dreadful calamities were denounced against an unbelieving world. The edification of the new Jerusalem was to advance by equal steps with the destruction of the mystic Babylon; and as long as the emperors who reigned before Constantine persisted in the profession of idolatry, the epithet of Babylon was applied to the city and to the empire of Rome. A regular series was prepared of all the moral and physical evils which can afflict a flourishing nation; intestine discord, and the invasion of the fiercest barbarians from the unknown regions of the North; pestilence and famine, comets and eclipses, earthquakes and inundations.⁶⁸ All these were only so many pre-

Conflagration
of Rome and
of the world.

⁶⁶ Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclésiastique*, tom. i. p. 223, tom. ii. p. 366, and Mosheim, p. 720; though the latter of these learned divines is not altogether candid on this occasion.

⁶⁷ In the council of Laodicea (about the year 360) the Apocalypse was tacitly excluded from the sacred canon by the same churches of Asia to which it is addressed; and we may learn from the complaint of Sulpicius Severus that their sentence had been ratified by the greater number of Christians of his time. From what causes then is the Apocalypse at present so generally received by the Greek, the Roman, and the Protestant churches? The following ones may be assigned:—1. The Greeks were subdued by the authority of an impostor, who, in the sixth century, assumed the character of Dionysius the Areopagite. 2. A just apprehension that the grammarians might become more important than the theologians engaged the council of Trent to fix the seal of their infallibility on all the books of Scripture contained in the Latin Vulgate, in the number of which the Apocalypse was fortunately included (Fr. Paolo, *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino*, l. ii.). 3. The advantage of turning those mysterious prophecies against the See of Rome inspired the Protestants with uncommon veneration for so useful an ally. See the ingenious and elegant discourses of the present bishop of Lichfield on that unpromising subject.^a

⁶⁸ Lactantius (*Institut. Divin.* vii. 15, &c.) relates the dismal tale of futurity with great spirit and eloquence.^b

^a The exclusion of the Apocalypse is not improbably assigned to its obvious unfitness to be read in churches. It is to be feared that a history of the interpretation of the Apocalypse would not give a very favourable view either of the wisdom or the charity of the successive ages of Christianity. Wetstein's interpretation, differ-

ently modified, is adopted by most Continental scholars.—M.

^b Lactantius had a notion of a great Asiatic empire, which was previously to rise on the ruins of the Roman: quod Romanum nomen (horret animus dicere, sed dicam, quia futurum est) tolletur de terrâ, et imperium in Asiam revertetur.—M.

paratory and alarming signs of the great catastrophe of Rome, when the country of the Scipios and Cæsars should be consumed by a flame from Heaven, and the city of the seven hills, with her palaces, her temples, and her triumphal arches, should be buried in a vast lake of fire and brimstone. It might, however, afford some consolation to Roman vanity, that the period of their empire would be that of the world itself; which, as it had once perished by the element of water, was destined to experience a second and a speedy destruction from the element of fire. In the opinion of a general conflagration the faith of the Christian very happily coincided with the tradition of the East, the philosophy of the Stoics, and the analogy of Nature; and even the country which, from religious motives, had been chosen for the origin and principal scene of the conflagration, was the best adapted for that purpose by natural and physical causes—by its deep caverns, beds of sulphur, and numerous volcanoes, of which those of *Ætna*, of *Vesuvius*, and of *Lipari*, exhibit a very imperfect representation. The calmest and most intrepid sceptic could not refuse to acknowledge that the destruction of the present system of the world by fire was in itself extremely probable. The Christian, who founded his belief much less on the fallacious arguments of reason than on the authority of tradition and the interpretation of Scripture, expected it with terror and confidence as a certain and approaching event; and as his mind was perpetually filled with the solemn idea, he considered every disaster that happened to the empire as an infallible symptom of an expiring world.⁶⁹

The condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous of the Pagans, on account of their ignorance or disbelief of the divine truth, seems to offend the reason and the humanity of the present age.⁷⁰ But the primitive church, whose faith was of a much firmer consistence, delivered over, without hesitation, to eternal torture, the far greater part of the human species. A charitable hope might perhaps be indulged in favour of Socrates, or some other sages of antiquity, who had consulted the light of reason before that of the Gospel had arisen.⁷¹ But it was unanimously affirmed that those who,

The Pagans
devoted to
eternal
punishment.

⁶⁹ On this subject every reader of taste will be entertained with the third part of Burnet's *Sacred Theory*. He blends philosophy, Scripture, and tradition, into one magnificent system; in the description of which he displays a strength of fancy not inferior to that of Milton himself.

⁷⁰ And yet, whatever may be the language of individuals, it is still the public doctrine of all the Christian churches; nor can even our own refuse to admit the conclusions which must be drawn from the viiith and the xviith of her Articles. The Jansenists, who have so diligently studied the works of the fathers, maintain this sentiment with distinguished zeal; and the learned M. de Tillemont never dismisses a virtuous emperor without pronouncing his damnation. Zuinglius is perhaps the only leader of a party who has ever adopted the milder sentiment, and he gave no less offence to the Lutherans than to the Catholics. See Bossuet, *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes*, l. ii. c. 19–22.

⁷¹ Justin and Clemens of Alexandria allow that some of the philosophers were in-

since the birth or the death of Christ, had obstinately persisted in the worship of the dæmons, neither deserved nor could expect a pardon from the irritated justice of the Deity. These rigid sentiments, which had been unknown to the ancient world, appear to have infused a spirit of bitterness into a system of love and harmony. The ties of blood and friendship were frequently torn asunder by the difference of religious faith; and the Christians, who, in this world, found themselves oppressed by the power of the Pagans, were sometimes seduced by resentment and spiritual pride to delight in the prospect of their future triumph. "You are fond of spectacles," exclaims the stern Tertullian, "expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs, and fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red-hot flames with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ; so many tragedians, more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers—" But the humanity of the reader will permit me to draw a veil over the rest of this infernal description, which the zealous African pursues in a long variety of affected and unfeeling witticisms.⁷²

Doubtless there were many among the primitive Christians of a temper more suitable to the meekness and charity of their profession. There were many who felt a sincere com-^{Were often converted by their fears.} passion for the danger of their friends and countrymen, and who exerted the most benevolent zeal to save them from the impending destruction. The careless Polytheist, assailed by new and unexpected terrors, against which neither his priests nor his philosophers could afford him any certain protection, was very frequently terrified and subdued by the menace of eternal tortures. His fears might assist the progress of his faith and reason; and if he could once persuade himself to suspect that the Christian religion might possibly be true, it became an easy task to convince him that it was the safest and most prudent party that he could possibly embrace.

structed by the Logos; confounding its double signification of the human reason and of the Divine Word.

⁷² Tertullian, de Spectaculis, c. 30. In order to ascertain the degree of authority which the zealous African had acquired, it may be sufficient to allege the testimony of Cyprian, the doctor and guide of all the western churches (see Prudent. Hym. xiii. 100). As often as he applied himself to his daily study of the writings of Tertullian, he was accustomed to say "*Da mihi magistrum*; Give me my master." (Hieronym. de Viris Illustribus, tom. i. p. 284 [c. 53, tom. ii. p. 878, ed. Vallars.].)

III. The supernatural gifts, which even in this life were ascribed to the Christians above the rest of mankind, must have conduced to their own comfort, and very frequently to the conviction of infidels. Besides the occasional prodigies, which might sometimes be effected by the immediate interposition of the Deity when he suspended the laws of Nature for the service of religion, the Christian church, from the time of the apostles and their first disciples,⁷³ has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers, the gift of tongues, of vision, and of prophecy, the power of expelling dæmons, of healing the sick, and of raising the dead. The knowledge of foreign languages was frequently communicated to the contemporaries of Irenæus, though Irenæus himself was left to struggle with the difficulties of a barbarous dialect whilst he preached the Gospel to the natives of Gaul.⁷⁴ The divine inspiration, whether it was conveyed in the form of a waking or of a sleeping vision, is described as a favour very liberally bestowed on all ranks of the faithful, on women as on elders, on boys as well as upon bishops. When their devout minds were sufficiently prepared by a course of prayer, of fasting, and of vigils, to receive the extraordinary impulse, they were transported out of their senses, and delivered in extasy what was inspired, being mere organs of the Holy Spirit, just as a pipe or flute is of him who blows into it.⁷⁵ We may add that the design of these visions was, for the most part, either to disclose the future history, or to guide the present administration, of the church. The expulsion of the dæmons from the bodies of those unhappy persons whom they had been permitted to torment was considered as a signal though ordinary triumph of religion, and is repeatedly alleged by the ancient apologists as the most convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity. The awful ceremony was usually performed in a public manner, and in the presence of a great

⁷³ Notwithstanding the evasions of Dr. Middleton, it is impossible to overlook the clear traces of visions and inspiration which may be found in the apostolic fathers.^a

⁷⁴ Irenæus adv. Hæres. Proem. p. 3. Dr. Middleton (Free Inquiry, p. 96, &c.) observes that, as this pretension of all others was the most difficult to support by art, it was the soonest given up. The observation suits his hypothesis.^b

⁷⁵ Athenagoras in Legatione. Justin Martyr, Cohort. ad Gentes. Tertullian advers. Marcionem, l. iv. These descriptions are not very unlike the prophetic fury for which Cicero (de Divinat. ii. 54) expresses so little reverence.

^a Gibbon should have noticed the distinct and remarkable passage from Chrysostom, quoted by Middleton (Works, vol. i. p. 105), in which he affirms the long discontinuance of miracles as a notorious fact.—M.

^b Except in the Life of Pachomius, an Egyptian monk of the fourth century (see

Jortin, Ecc. Hist. i. p. 368, edit. 1805), and the later (not earlier) Lives of Xavier, there is no claim laid to the gift of tongues since the time of Irenæus; and of this claim Xavier's own letters are profoundly silent. See Douglas's Criterion, p. 76, edit. 1807. —M.

number of spectators ; the patient was relieved by the power or skill of the exorcist, and the vanquished dæmon was heard to confess that he was one of the fabled gods of antiquity, who had impiously usurped the adoration of mankind.⁷⁶ But the miraculous cure of diseases of the most inveterate or even preternatural kind can no longer occasion any surprise, when we recollect that in the days of Irenæus, about the end of the second century, the resurrection of the dead was very far from being esteemed an uncommon event ; that the miracle was frequently performed on necessary occasions, by great fasting and the joint supplication of the church of the place, and that the persons thus restored to their prayers had lived afterwards among them many years.⁷⁷ At such a period, when faith could boast of so many wonderful victories over death, it seems difficult to account for the scepticism of those philosophers who still rejected and derided the doctrine of the resurrection. A noble Grecian had rested on this important ground the whole controversy, and promised Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, that, if he could be gratified with the sight of a single person who had been actually raised from the dead, he would immediately embrace the Christian religion. It is somewhat remarkable that the prelate of the first eastern church, however anxious for the conversion of his friend, thought proper to decline this fair and reasonable challenge.⁷⁸

The miracles of the primitive church, after obtaining the sanction of ages, have been lately attacked in a very free and ingenious inquiry ;⁷⁹ which, though it has met with the most favourable reception from the public, appears to have excited a general scandal among the divines of our own as well as of the other

Their truth
contested.

⁷⁶ Tertullian (Apolog. c. 23) throws out a bold defiance to the Pagan magistrates. Of the primitive miracles, the power of exorcising is the only one which has been assumed by Protestants.^a

⁷⁷ Irenæus adv. Hæreses, l. ii. c. 56, 57, l. v. c. 6. Mr. Dodwell (Dissertat. ad Irenæum, ii. 42) concludes that the second century was still more fertile in miracles than the first.^b

⁷⁸ Theophilus ad Autolycum, l. i. p. 345, edit. Benedictin. Paris, 1742 [p. 35, ed. Oxon. 1684].^c

⁷⁹ Dr. Middleton sent out his Introduction in the year 1747, published his Free Inquiry in 1749, and before his death, which happened in 1750, he had prepared a vindication of it against his numerous adversaries.

^a But by Protestants neither of the most enlightened ages nor most reasoning minds. —M.

^b It is difficult to answer Middleton's objection to this statement of Irenæus: "It is very strange that from the time of the Apostles there is not a single instance of this miracle to be found in the three first centuries: except a single case, slightly intimated in Eusebius, from the works

of Papias; which he seems to rank among the other fabulous stories delivered by that weak man." Middleton, Works, vol. i. p. 59. Bp. Douglas (Criterion, p. 389) would consider Irenæus to speak of what had "been performed formerly," not in his own time.—M.

^c A candid sceptic might discern some impropriety in the bishop being called upon to perform a miracle on demand.—M.

Protestant churches of Europe.⁸⁰ Our different sentiments on this subject will be much less influenced by any particular arguments than by our habits of study and reflection, and, above all, by the degree of the evidence which we have accustomed ourselves to require for the proof of a miraculous event. The duty of an historian does not call upon him to interpose his private judgment in this nice and important controversy; but he ought not to dissemble the difficulty of adopting such a theory as may reconcile the interest of religion with that of reason, of making a proper application of that theory, and of defining with precision the limits of that happy period, exempt from error and from deceit, to which we might be disposed to extend the gift of supernatural powers. From the first of the fathers to the last of the popes, a succession of bishops, of saints, of martyrs, and of miracles, is continued without interruption; and the progress of superstition was so gradual and almost imperceptible, that we know not in what particular link we should break the chain of tradition. Every age bears testimony to the wonderful events by which it was distinguished, and its testimony appears no less weighty and respectable than that of the preceding generation, till we are insensibly led on to accuse our own inconsistency if, in the eighth or in the twelfth century, we deny to the venerable Bede, or to the holy Bernard, the same degree of confidence which, in the second century, we had so liberally granted to Justin or to Irenæus.⁸¹ If the truth of any of those miracles is appreciated by their apparent use and propriety, every age had unbelievers to convince, heretics to confute, and idolatrous nations to convert; and sufficient motives might always be produced to justify the interposition of Heaven. And yet, since every friend to revelation is persuaded of the reality, and every reasonable man is convinced of the cessation, of miraculous powers, it is evident that there must have been *some period* in which they were either suddenly or gradually withdrawn from the Christian church. Whatever æra is chosen for that purpose, the death of the apostles, the conversion of the Roman empire, or the extinction of the Arian heresy,⁸² the insensibility of the Christians who lived at that time

⁸⁰ The university of Oxford conferred degrees on his opponents. From the indignation of Mosheim (p. 221) we may discover the sentiments of the Lutheran divines.^a

⁸¹ It may seem somewhat remarkable that Bernard of Clairvaux, who records so many miracles of his friend St. Malachi, never takes any notice of his own, which, in their turn, however, are carefully related by his companions and disciples. In the long series of ecclesiastical history, does there exist a single instance of a saint asserting that he himself possessed the gift of miracles?

⁸² The conversion of Constantine is the æra which is most usually fixed by Protestants.

^a Yet many Protestant divines will now without reluctance confine miracles to the time of the Apostles, or at least to the first century.—M.

will equally afford a just matter of surprise. They still supported their pretensions after they had lost their power. Credulity performed the office of faith; fanaticism was permitted to assume the language of inspiration, and the effects of accident or contrivance were ascribed to supernatural causes. The recent experience of genuine miracles should have instructed the Christian world in the ways of Providence, and habituated their eye (if we may use a very inadequate expression) to the style of the Divine artist. Should the most skilful painter of modern Italy presume to decorate his feeble imitations with the name of Raphael or of Correggio, the insolent fraud would be soon discovered and indignantly rejected.

Whatever opinion may be entertained of the miracles of the primitive church since the time of the apostles, this unresisting softness of temper, so conspicuous among the believers of the second and third centuries, proved of some accidental benefit to the cause of truth and religion. In modern times, a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres to the most pious dispositions. Their admission of supernatural truths is much less an active consent than a cold and passive acquiescence. Accustomed long since to observe and to respect the invariable order of Nature, our reason, or at least our imagination, is not sufficiently prepared to sustain the visible action of the Deity. But in the first ages of Christianity the situation of mankind was extremely different. The most curious, or the most credulous, among the Pagans, were often persuaded to enter into a society which asserted an actual claim of miraculous powers. The primitive Christians perpetually trod on mystic ground, and their minds were exercised by the habits of believing the most extraordinary events. They felt, or they fancied, that on every side they were incessantly assaulted by dæmons, comforted by visions, instructed by prophecy, and surprisingly delivered from danger, sickness, and from death itself, by the supplications of the church. The real or

Use of the
primitive
miracles.

The more rational divines are unwilling to admit the miracles of the ivth, whilst the more credulous are unwilling to reject those of the vth century.^a

^a All this appears to proceed on the principle that any distinct line can be drawn in an unphilosophic age between wonders and miracles, or between what piety, from their unexpected and extraordinary nature, the marvellous concurrence of secondary causes to some remarkable end, may consider *providential interpositions*, and *miracles* strictly so called, in which the laws of nature are suspended or violated. It is impossible to assign, on one side, limits to human credulity, on the other, to the influence of the imagina-

tion on the bodily frame; but some of the miracles recorded in the Gospels are such palpable *impossibilities*, according to the known laws and operations of nature, that, if recorded on sufficient evidence, and the evidence we believe to be that of eye-witnesses, we cannot reject them, without either asserting, with Hume, that no evidence can prove a miracle, or that the Author of Nature has no power of suspending its ordinary laws. But which of the *post-apostolic* miracles will bear this test?—M.

imaginary prodigies, of which they so frequently conceived themselves to be the objects, the instruments, or the spectators, very happily disposed them to adopt with the same ease, but with far greater justice, the authentic wonders of the evangelic history; and thus miracles that exceeded not the measure of their own experience inspired them with the most lively assurance of mysteries which were acknowledged to surpass the limits of their understanding. It is this deep impression of supernatural truths which has been so much celebrated under the name of faith—a state of mind described as the surest pledge of the Divine favour and of future felicity, and recommended as the first or perhaps the only merit of a Christian. According to the more rigid doctors, the moral virtues, which may be equally practised by infidels, are destitute of any value or efficacy in the work of our justification.

IV. But the primitive Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues; and it was very justly supposed that the Divine persuasion, which enlightened or subdued the understanding, must at the same time purify the heart and direct the actions of the believer. The first apologists of Christianity who justify the innocence of their brethren, and the writers of a later period who celebrate the sanctity of their ancestors, display, in the most lively colours, the reformation of manners which was introduced into the world by the preaching of the Gospel. As it is my intention to remark only such human causes as were permitted to second the influence of revelation, I shall slightly mention two motives which might naturally render the lives of the primitive Christians much purer and more austere than those of their Pagan contemporaries or their degenerate successors—repentance for their past sins, and the laudable desire of supporting the reputation of the society in which they were engaged.^a

It is a very ancient reproach, suggested by the ignorance or the malice of infidelity, that the Christians allured into their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away, in the water of baptism, the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of the gods refused to grant them any expiation. But this reproach, when it is cleared from misrepresentation, contributes as much to the honour as it did to the increase of the church.⁸³

⁸³ The imputations of Celsus and Julian, with the defence of the fathers, are very fairly stated by Spanheim, *Commentaire sur les Césars de Julian*, p. 468.

^a These, in the opinion of the editor, *Gibbon's History*. He ought either, with are the most uncandid paragraphs in Gib- man's courage, to have denied the moral

The friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush that many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners. Those persons who in the world had followed, though in an imperfect manner, the dictates of benevolence and propriety, derived such a calm satisfaction from the opinion of their own rectitude as rendered them much less susceptible of the sudden emotions of shame, of grief, and of terror, which have given birth to so many wonderful conversions. After the example of their Divine Master, the missionaries of the Gospel disdained not the society of men, and especially of women, oppressed by the consciousness, and very often by the effects, of their vices. As they emerged from sin and superstition to the glorious hope of immortality, they resolved to devote themselves to a life, not only of virtue, but of penitence. The desire of perfection became the ruling passion of their soul; and it is well known that, while reason embraces a cold mediocrity, our passions hurry us with rapid violence over the space which lies between the most opposite extremes. "

When the new converts had been enrolled in the number of the faithful, and were admitted to the sacraments of the church, they found themselves restrained from relapsing into their ^{Care of their reputation.} past disorders by another consideration of a less spiritual but of a very innocent and respectable nature. Any particular society that has departed from the great body of the nation, or the religion to which it belonged, immediately becomes the object of universal as well as invidious observation. In proportion to the smallness of its numbers, the character of the society may be affected by the virtue and vices of the persons who compose it; and every member is engaged to watch with the most vigilant attention over his own behaviour, and over that of his brethren, since, as he must expect to incur a part of the common disgrace, he may hope to enjoy a share of the common reputation. When the Christians of Bithynia were brought before the tribunal of the younger Pliny, they assured the proconsul that, far from being engaged in any unlawful conspiracy, they were bound by a solemn obligation to abstain from the commission of those crimes which disturb the private or public peace of society, from theft, robbery, adultery, perjury, and fraud.^{84 a} Near a century afterwards, Tertullian with an honest pride could boast that very few Christians

⁸⁴ Plin. Epist. x. 97.

reformation introduced by Christianity, or fairly to have investigated all its motives; not to have confined himself to an insidious and sarcastic description of the less pure and generous elements of the Christian

character as it appeared even at that early time.—M.

^a And this blamelessness was fully admitted by the candid and enlightened Roman.—M.

had suffered by the hand of the executioner, except on account of their religion.⁸⁵ Their serious and sequestered life, averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, economy, and all the sober and domestic virtues. As the greater number were of some trade or profession, it was incumbent on them, by the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions which the profane are too apt to conceive against the appearances of sanctity. The contempt of the world exercised them in the habits of humility, meekness, and patience. The more they were persecuted, the more closely they adhered to each other. Their mutual charity and unsuspecting confidence has been remarked by infidels, and was too often abused by perfidious friends.⁸⁶

It is a very honourable circumstance for the morals of the primitive Christians, that even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue. The bishops and doctors of the church, whose evidence attests, and whose authority might influence, the professions, the principles, and even the practice of their contemporaries, had studied the Scriptures with less skill than devotion; and they often received in the most literal sense those rigid precepts of Christ and the apostles to which the prudence of succeeding commentators has applied a looser and more figurative mode of interpretation. Ambitious to exalt the perfection of the Gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers have carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, and of patience, to a height which it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption. A doctrine so extraordinary and so sublime must inevitably command the veneration of the people; but it was ill calculated to obtain the suffrage of those worldly philosophers who, in the conduct of this transitory life, consult only the feelings of nature and the interest of society.⁸⁷

There are two very natural propensities which we may distinguish in the most virtuous and liberal dispositions, the love of pleasure and the love of action. If the former is refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to economy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life. The love of action is a principle of a much stronger and more doubtful nature. It often leads to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but

⁸⁵ Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 44. He adds, however, with some degree of hesitation, "Aut si [et] aliud, jam non Christianus."

⁸⁶ The philosopher Peregrinus (of whose life and death Lucian has left us so entertaining an account) imposed, for a long time, on the credulous simplicity of the Christians of Asia.

⁸⁷ See a very judicious treatise of Barbeyrac sur la Morale des Pères.

when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence, it becomes the parent of every virtue, and, if those virtues are accompanied with equal abilities, a family, a state, or an empire, may be indebted for their safety and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single man. To the love of pleasure we may therefore ascribe most of the agreeable, to the love of action we may attribute most of the useful and respectable, qualifications. The character in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonised would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature. The insensible and inactive disposition, which should be supposed alike destitute of both, would be rejected, by the common consent of mankind, as utterly incapable of procuring any happiness to the individual, or any public benefit to the world. But it was not in *this* world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.^a

The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of our reason or fancy, and the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation, may employ the leisure of a liberal mind. Such amusements, however, were rejected with abhorrence, or admitted with the utmost caution, by the severity of the fathers, who despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation, and who considered all levity of discourse as a criminal abuse of the gift of speech. In our present state of existence the body is so inseparably connected with the soul, that it seems to be our interest to taste, with innocence and moderation, the enjoyments of which that faithful companion is susceptible. Very different was the reasoning of our devout predecessors; vainly aspiring to imitate the perfection of angels, they disdained, or they affected to disdain, every earthly and corporeal delight.^{ss} Some of our senses indeed are necessary for our preservation, others for our subsistence, and others again for our information; and thus far it was impossible to reject the use of them. The first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of their abuse. The unfeeling candidate for heaven was instructed,

The
primitive
Christians
condemn
pleasure
and luxury.

^{ss} Lactant. Institut. Divin. l. vi. c. 20, 21, 22.

^a Et que me fait cette homélie semi-stoïcienne, semi-épicurienne? A-t-on jamais regardé l'amour du plaisir comme l'un des principes de la perfection morale? Et de quel droit faites vous de l'amour de l'action, et de l'amour du plaisir, les seuls éléments de l'être humain? Est-ce que vous faites abstraction de la vérité en elle-même, de la conscience et du sentiment du devoir? Est-ce que vous ne sentez point, par exemple, que le sacrifice du

moi à la justice et à la vérité est aussi dans le cœur de l'homme; que tout n'est pas pour lui action ou plaisir; et que dans le bien ce n'est pas le mouvement, mais la vérité, qu'il cherche? Et puis * * Thucydide et Tacite, ces maîtres de l'histoire, ont-ils jamais introduits dans leurs récits un fragment de dissertation sur le plaisir et sur l'action? Villenain, Cours de Lit. Franç. part II. Leçon V.—M.

not only to resist the grosser allurements of the taste or smell, but even to shut his ears against the profane harmony of sounds, and to view with indifference the most finished productions of human art. Gay apparel, magnificent houses, and elegant furniture, were supposed to unite the double guilt of pride and of sensuality: a simple and mortified appearance was more suitable to the Christian who was certain of his sins and doubtful of his salvation. In their censures of luxury the fathers are extremely minute and circumstantial; ⁸⁹ and among the various articles which excite their pious indignation we may enumerate false hair, garments of any colour except white, instruments of music, vases of gold or silver, downy pillows (as Jacob reposed his head on a stone), white bread, foreign wines, public salutations, the use of warm baths, and the practice of shaving the beard, which, according to the expression of Tertullian, is a lie against our own faces, and an impious attempt to improve the works of the Creator.⁹⁰ When Christianity was introduced among the rich and the polite, the observation of these singular laws was left, as it would be at present, to the few who were ambitious of superior sanctity. But it is always easy, as well as agreeable, for the inferior ranks of mankind to claim a merit from the contempt of that pomp and pleasure which fortune has placed beyond their reach. The virtue of the primitive Christians, like that of the first Romans, was very frequently guarded by poverty and ignorance.

The chaste severity of the fathers in whatever related to the commerce of the two sexes flowed from the same principle—their abhorrence of every enjoyment which might gratify the sensual, and degrade the spiritual nature of man. It was their favourite opinion, that if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he would have lived for ever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled paradise with a race of innocent and immortal beings.⁹¹ The use of marriage was permitted only to his fallen posterity, as a necessary expedient to continue the human species, and as a restraint, however imperfect, on the natural licentiousness of desire. The hesitation of the orthodox casuists on this interesting subject betrays the

Their
sentiments
concerning
marriage
and chastity.

⁸⁹ Consult a work of Clemens of Alexandria, intitled *The Pædagogus*, which contains the rudiments of ethics, as they were taught in the most celebrated of the Christian schools.

⁹⁰ Tertullian, *de Spectaculis*, c. 23. Clemens Alexandrin. *Pædagog.* l. iii. c. 8.

⁹¹ Beausobre, *Hist. Critique du Manichéisme*, l. vii. c. 3. Justin, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustin, &c., strongly inclined to this opinion.^a

^a But these were Gnostic or Manichean opinions. Beausobre distinctly ascribes Augustin's bias to his recent escape from

Manichæism; and adds that he afterwards changed his views.—M.

perplexity of men unwilling to approve an institution which they were compelled to tolerate.⁹² The enumeration of the very whimsical laws which they most circumstantially imposed on the marriage-bed would force a smile from the young and a blush from the fair. It was their unanimous sentiment that a first marriage was adequate to all the purposes of nature and of society. The sensual connection was refined into a resemblance of the mystic union of Christ with his church, and was pronounced to be indissoluble either by divorce or by death. The practice of second nuptials was branded with the name of a legal adultery; and the persons who were guilty of so scandalous an offence against Christian purity were soon excluded from the honours, and even from the arms, of the church.⁹³ Since desire was imputed as a crime, and marriage was tolerated as a defect, it was consistent with the same principles to consider a state of celibacy as the nearest approach to the Divine perfection. It was with the utmost difficulty that ancient Rome could support the institution of six vestals;⁹⁴ but the primitive church was filled with a great number of persons of either sex who had devoted themselves to the profession of perpetual chastity.⁹⁵ A few of these, among whom we may reckon the learned Origen, judged it the most prudent to disarm the tempter.⁹⁶ Some were insensible and some were invincible against the assaults of the flesh. Disdaining an ignominious flight, the virgins of the warm climate of Africa encountered the enemy in the closest engagement; they permitted priests and deacons to share their bed, and gloried amidst the flames in their unsullied purity. But insulted Nature sometimes vindicated her rights, and this new species of martyrdom served only to introduce a new scandal into the church.⁹⁷ Among the Christian ascetics, however (a name which they soon acquired from their painful exercise), many, as they were less presumptuous, were probably more successful. The loss of sensual pleasure was supplied and compensated by spiritual pride.

⁹² Some of the Gnostic heretics were more consistent; they rejected the use of marriage.

⁹³ See a chain of tradition, from Justin Martyr to Jerome, in the *Morale des Pères*, c. iv. 6-26.

⁹⁴ See a very curious Dissertation on the Vestals, in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. iv. p. 161-227. Notwithstanding the honours and rewards which were bestowed on those virgins, it was difficult to procure a sufficient number; nor could the dread of the most horrible death always restrain their incontinence.

⁹⁵ *Cupiditatem procreandi aut unam scimus aut nullam.* Minucius Felix, c. 31. Justin. Apolog. Major. Athenagoras in Legat. c. 28. Tertullian de Cultu Femin. l. ii.

⁹⁶ Eusebius, l. vi. 8. Before the fame of Origen had excited envy and persecution, this extraordinary action was rather admired than censured. As it was his general practice to allegorize Scripture, it seems unfortunate that, in this instance only, he should have adopted the literal sense.

⁹⁷ Cyprian. Epist. 4, and Dodwell, Dissertat. Cyprianic. iii. Something like this rash attempt was long afterwards imputed to the founder of the order of Fontevault. Bayle has amused himself and his readers on that very delicate subject.

Even the multitude of Pagans were inclined to estimate the merit of the sacrifice by its apparent difficulty; and it was in the praise of these chaste spouses of Christ that the fathers have poured forth the troubled stream of their eloquence.⁹⁸ Such are the early traces of monastic principles and institutions, which, in a subsequent age, have counterbalanced all the temporal advantages of Christianity.⁹⁹

The Christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world. The defence of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries, and commanded them to invite the repetition of fresh insults. Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy, and by the active contention of public life; nor could their humane ignorance be convinced that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice or by that of war, even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community.¹⁰⁰ It was acknowledged that, under a less perfect law, the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of Heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The Christians felt and confessed that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the empire. Some indulgence might perhaps be allowed to those persons who, before their conversion, were already engaged in such violent and sanguinary occupations;¹⁰¹ but it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes.¹⁰² This indolent,

⁹⁸ Dupin (*Bibliothèque Ecclésiastique*, tom. i. p. 195) gives a particular account of the dialogue of the ten virgins, as it was composed by Methodius, bishop of Tyre. The praises of virginity are excessive.

⁹⁹ The Ascetics (as early as the second century) made a public profession of mortifying their bodies, and of abstaining from the use of flesh and wine. Mosheim, p. 310.

¹⁰⁰ See the *Morale des Pères*. The same patient principles have been revived since the Reformation by the Socinians, the modern Anabaptists, and the Quakers. Barclay, the Apologist of the Quakers, has protected his brethren by the authority of the primitive Christians; p. 542-549.

¹⁰¹ Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 21; *De Idololatriâ*, c. 17, 18. Origen contra Celsum, l. v. p. 253 [c. 33, tom. i. p. 602, ed. Bened.], l. vii. p. 349 [c. 26, p. 712], l. viii. p. 423-428 [c. 68 sq. p. 793 sq.].

¹⁰² Tertullian (*de Coronâ Militis*, c. 11) suggested to them the expedient of deserting; a counsel which, if it had been generally known, was not very proper to conciliate the favour of the emperors towards the Christian sect.*

* There is nothing which ought to astonish us in the refusal of the primitive Christians to take part in public affairs; it was the natural consequence of the contrariety of their principles to the customs, laws, and active life of the Pagan world.

or even criminal disregard to the public welfare, exposed them to the contempt and reproaches of the Pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect? ¹⁰³ To this insulting question the Christian apologists returned obscure and ambiguous answers, as they were unwilling to reveal the secret cause of their security; the expectation that, before the conversion of mankind was accomplished, war, government, the Roman empire, and the world itself, would be no more. It may be observed that, in this instance likewise, the situation of the first Christians coincided very happily with their religious scruples, and that their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service than to exclude them from the honours of the state and army.

V. But the human character, however it may be exalted or depressed by a temporary enthusiasm, will return by degrees to its proper and natural level, and will resume those passions that seem the most adapted to its present condition. The primitive Christians were dead to the business and pleasures of the world; but their love of action, which could never be entirely extinguished, soon revived, and found a new occupation in the government of the church. A separate society, which attacked the established religion of the empire, was obliged to adopt some form of internal policy, and to appoint a sufficient number of ministers, intrusted not only with the spiritual functions, but even

THE FIFTH CAUSE.
The Christians active in the government of the church.

¹⁰³ As well as we can judge from the mutilated representation of Origen (l. viii. p. 423 [c. 73, tom. i. p. 796, ed. Bened.]), his adversary, Celsus, had urged his objection with great force and candour.

As Christians, they could not enter into the senate, which, according to Gibbon himself, always assembled in a temple or consecrated place, and where each senator, before he took his seat, made a libation of a few drops of wine, and burnt incense on the altar; as Christians, they could not assist at festivals and banquets, which always terminated with libations, &c.; finally, as "the innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of public and private life," the Christians could not participate in them without incurring, according to their principles, the guilt of impiety. It was then much less by an effect of their doctrine than by the consequence of their situation that they stood aloof from public business. Whenever this situation offered no impediment, they showed as much activity as the Pagans.

Many passages of Tertullian prove that the army was full of Christians: *Hesterni sumus et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa.* (Apol. c. 37.) *Navigamus et nos vobiscum et militamus* (c. 42). Origen, in truth, appears to have maintained a more rigid opinion (Cont. Cels. l. viii.); but he has often renounced this exaggerated severity, perhaps necessary to produce great results, and he speaks of the profession of arms as an honourable one (l. iv. c. [83] 218 [tom. i. p. 564, ed. Bened.]).—G.

On these points Christian opinion, it should seem, was much divided. Tertullian, when he wrote the *De Cor. Mil.*, was evidently inclining to more ascetic opinions, and Origen was of the same class. See Neander, vol. i. part 2, p. 305, edit 1828.—M.

with the temporal direction of the Christian commonwealth. The safety of that society, its honour, its aggrandisement, were productive, even in the most pious minds, of a spirit of patriotism, such as the first of the Romans had felt for the republic, and sometimes of a similar indifference in the use of whatever means might probably conduce to so desirable an end. The ambition of raising themselves or their friends to the honours and offices of the church was disguised by the laudable intention of devoting to the public benefit the power and consideration which, for that purpose only, it became their duty to solicit. In the exercise of their functions they were frequently called upon to detect the errors of heresy or the arts of faction, to oppose the designs of perfidious brethren, to stigmatise their characters with deserved infamy, and to expel them from the bosom of a society whose peace and happiness they had attempted to disturb. The ecclesiastical governors of the Christians were taught to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove; but as the former was refined, so the latter was insensibly corrupted, by the habits of government. In the church as well as in the world, the persons who were placed in any public station rendered themselves considerable by their eloquence and firmness, by their knowledge of mankind, and by their dexterity in business; and while they concealed from others, and perhaps from themselves, the secret motives of their conduct, they too frequently relapsed into all the turbulent passions of active life, which were tinged with an additional degree of bitterness and obstinacy from the infusion of spiritual zeal.

The government of the church has often been the subject, as well as the prize, of religious contention. The hostile disputants of Rome, of Paris, of Oxford, and of Geneva, have alike struggled to reduce the primitive and apostolic model¹⁰⁴ to the respective standards of their own policy. The few who have pursued this inquiry with more candour and impartiality are of opinion¹⁰⁵ that the apostles declined the office of legislation, and rather chose to endure some partial scandals and divisions, than to exclude the Christians of a future age from the liberty of varying their forms of ecclesiastical government according to the changes of times and circumstances. The scheme of policy which, under their approbation, was adopted for the use of the first century, may be discovered from the practice of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, or of Corinth.

*Its primitive
freedom and
equality.*

¹⁰⁴ The aristocratical party in France, as well as in England, has strenuously maintained the divine origin of bishops. But the Calvinistical presbyters were impatient of a superior; and the Roman Pontiff refused to acknowledge an equal. See Fra Paolo.

¹⁰⁵ In the history of the Christian hierarchy, I have, for the most part, followed the learned and candid Mosheim.

The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. The want of discipline and human learning was supplied by the occasional assistance of the *prophets*,¹⁰⁶ who were called to that function without distinction of age, of sex,^a or of natural abilities, and who, as often as they felt the divine impulse, poured forth the effusions of the Spirit in the assembly of the faithful. But these extraordinary gifts were frequently abused or misapplied by the prophetic teachers. They displayed them at an improper season, presumptuously disturbed the service of the assembly, and by their pride or mistaken zeal they introduced, particularly into the apostolic church of Corinth, a long and melancholy train of disorders.¹⁰⁷ As the institution of prophets became useless, and even pernicious, their powers were withdrawn, and their office abolished. The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the church, the *bishops* and the *presbyters*; two appellations which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. The name of Presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of Bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these *episcopal presbyters* guided each infant congregation with equal authority and with united counsels.¹⁰⁸

But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate: and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly.

*Institution of
bishops as
presidents of
the college
of presbyters*

A regard for the public tranquillity, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive Christians to constitute an honourable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their presbyters to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of Pres-

¹⁰⁶ For the prophets of the primitive church, see Mosheim, *Dissertationes ad Hist. Eccles. pertinentes*, tom. ii. p. 132-208.

¹⁰⁷ See the epistles of St. Paul, and of Clemens, to the Corinthians.

¹⁰⁸ Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, l. vii.

^a St. Paul distinctly reproves the intrusion of females into the prophetic office 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. 1 Tim. ii. 11.—M.

byter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president.¹⁰⁹ The advantages of this episcopal form of government, which appears to have been introduced before the end of the first century,¹¹⁰ were so obvious, and so important for the future greatness, as well as the present peace, of Christianity, that it was adopted without delay by all the societies which were already scattered over the empire, had acquired in a very early period the sanction of antiquity,¹¹¹ and is still revered by the most powerful churches, both of the East and of the West, as a primitive and even as a divine establishment.¹¹² It is needless to observe that the pious and humble presbyters who were first dignified with the episcopal title could not possess, and would probably have rejected, the power and pomp which now encircles the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. But we may define in a few words the narrow limits of their original jurisdiction, which was chiefly of a spiritual, though in some instances of a temporal nature.¹¹³ It consisted in the administration of the sacraments and discipline of the church, the superintendency of religious ceremonies, which imperceptibly increased in number and variety, the consecration of ecclesiastical ministers, to whom the bishop assigned their respective functions, the management of the public fund, and the determination of all such differences as the faithful were unwilling to expose before the tribunal of an idolatrous judge. These powers, during a short period, were exercised according to the advice of the presbyteral college, and with the consent and approbation of the assembly of Christians. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first of their equals, and the honourable servants of a free people. Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a

¹⁰⁹ See Jerome ad Titum, c. i. and Epistol. 85 (in the Benedictine edition, 101) [Ep. 146, ed. Vallars. tom. i. p. 1074], and the elaborate apology of Blondel, *pro sententiâ Hieronymi*. The ancient state, as it is described by Jerome, of the bishop and presbyters of Alexandria, receives a remarkable confirmation from the patriarch Eutychius (Annal. tom. i. p. 330, Vers. Pocock); whose testimony I know not how to reject, in spite of all the objections of the learned Pearson in his *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, part i. c. 11.

¹¹⁰ See the introduction to the Apocalypse. Bishops, under the name of angels, were already instituted in the seven cities of Asia. And yet the epistle of Clemens (which is probably of as ancient a date) does not lead us to discover any traces of episcopacy either at Corinth or Rome.

¹¹¹ *Nulla Ecclesia sine Episcopo*, has been a fact as well as a maxim since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus.

¹¹² After we have passed the difficulties of the first century, we find the episcopal government universally established, till it was interrupted by the republican genius of the Swiss and German reformers.

¹¹³ See Mosheim in the first and second centuries. Ignatius (ad Smyrnæos, c. 8, &c.) is fond of exalting the episcopal dignity. Le Clerc (Hist. Eccles. p. 569) very bluntly censures his conduct. Mosheim, with a more critical judgment (p. 161) suspects the purity even of the smaller epistles.

new president was chosen among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation, every member of which supposed himself invested with a sacred and sacerdotal character.¹¹⁴

Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed more than an hundred years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. As the numbers of the faithful were gradually multiplied, they discovered the advantages that might result from a closer union of their interest and designs. Towards the end of the second century, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods,^b and they may justly be supposed to have borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country, the Amphictyons, the Achæan league, or the assemblies of the Ionian cities. It was soon established as a custom and as a law, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province at the stated periods of spring and autumn. Their deliberations were assisted by the advice of a few distinguished presbyters, and moderated by the presence of a listening multitude.¹¹⁵ Their decrees, which were styled Canons, regulated every important con-

Provincial
councils.

¹¹⁴ Nonne et Laici sacerdotes sumus? Tertullian, Exhort. ad Castitat. c. 7. As the human heart is still the same, several of the observations which Mr. Hume has made on Enthusiasm (Essays, vol. i. p. 76, quarto edit.) may be applied even to real inspiration.

¹¹⁵ Acta Concil. Carthag. apud Cyprian. edit. Fell, p. 158. This council was composed of eighty-seven bishops from the provinces of Mauritania, Numidia, and Africa; some presbyters and deacons assisted at the assembly; præsentis plebis maximâ parte.

^a This expression was employed by the earlier Christian writers in the sense used by St. Peter, 1 Ep. ii. 9. It was the sanctity and virtue, not the power of the priesthood, in which all Christians were to be equally distinguished.—M.

^b The synods were not the first means taken by the insulated churches to enter into communion and to assume a corporate character. The *dioceses* were first formed by the union of several country churches with a church in a city: many churches in one city uniting among themselves, or joining; a more considerable church, became metropolitan. The dioceses were not formed before the beginning of the second century: before that time the Christians had not established sufficient churches in the country to stand in need of that union. It is towards the middle of the same century that we discover the first traces of the

metropolitan constitution. (Probably the country churches were founded in general by missionaries from those in the city, and would preserve a natural connection with the parent church.)—M.

The provincial synods did not commence till towards the middle of the third century, and were not the first synods. History gives us distinct notions of the synods held towards the end of the second century at Ephesus, at Jerusalem, at Pontus, and at Rome, to put an end to the disputes which had arisen between the Latin and Asiatic churches about the celebration of Easter. But these synods were not subject to any regular form or periodical return; this regularity was first established with the provincial synods, which were formed by an union of the bishops of a district, subject to a metropolitan. Planck, Geschichte der Christ. Kirch. Verfassung, p. 90.—G.

troversy of faith and discipline; and it was natural to believe that a liberal effusion of the Holy Spirit would be poured on the united assembly of the delegates of the Christian people. The institution of synods was so well suited to private ambition and to public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings; and the catholic church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength, of a great fœderative republic.¹¹⁶

Union of the
church.

As the legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the bishops obtained by their alliance a much larger share of executive and arbitrary power; and as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to attack, with united vigour, the original rights of their clergy and people. The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command, scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and supplied, by Scripture allegories and declamatory rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. They exalted the unity and power of the church, as it was represented in the EPISCOPAL OFFICE, of which every bishop enjoyed an equal and undivided portion.¹¹⁷ Princes and magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion: it was the episcopal authority alone which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this and over another world. The bishops were the vicegerents of Christ, the successors of the apostles, and the mystic substitutes of the high priest of the Mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character invaded the freedom both of clerical and of popular elections: and if, in the administration of the church, they still consulted the judgment of the presbyters or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a voluntary condescension. The bishops acknowledged the supreme authority which resided in the assembly of their brethren; but in the government of his peculiar diocese each of them exacted from his flock the same implicit obedience as if that favourite metaphor had been literally just, and as if the shepherd had been of a more exalted nature than that of his sheep.¹¹⁸ This obedience, however, was not

Progress of
episcopal
authority.

¹¹⁶ Aguntur præterea per Græcias illas, certis in locis concilia, &c. Tertullian de *Jejuniis*, c. 13. The African mentions it as a recent and foreign institution. The coalition of the Christian churches is very ably explained by Mosheim, p. 164-170.

¹¹⁷ Cyprian, in his admired treatise *De Unitate Ecclesie*, p. 75-86 [p. 108, ed. Oxon.].

¹¹⁸ We may appeal to the whole tenor of Cyprian's conduct, of his doctrine, and of

imposed without some efforts on one side, and some resistance on the other. The democratical part of the constitution was, in many places, very warmly supported by the zealous or interested opposition of the inferior clergy. But their patriotism received the ignominious epithets of faction and schism, and the episcopal cause was indebted for its rapid progress to the labours of many active prelates, who, like Cyprian of Carthage, could reconcile the arts of the most ambitious statesman with the Christian virtues which seem adapted to the character of a saint and martyr.¹¹⁹

The same causes which at first had destroyed the equality of the presbyters introduced among the bishops a pre-eminence of rank, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as in the spring and autumn they met in provincial synod, the difference of personal merit and reputation was very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. But the order of public proceedings required a more regular and less invidious distinction; the office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province was conferred on the bishops of the principal city; and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty titles of Metropolitans and Primates, secretly prepared themselves to usurp over their episcopal brethren the same authority which the bishops had so lately assumed above the college of presbyters.¹²⁰ Nor was it long before an emulation of pre-eminence and power prevailed among the Metropolitans themselves, each of them affecting to display, in the most pompous terms, the temporal honours and advantages of the city over which he presided; the numbers and opulence of the Christians who were subject to their pastoral care; the saints and martyrs who had arisen among them; and the purity with which they preserved the tradition of the faith as it had been transmitted through a series of orthodox bishops from the apostle or the apostolic disciple to whom the foundation of their church was ascribed.¹²¹ From every cause, either of a civil or of an ecclesiastical nature, it was easy to foresee that Rome must enjoy the respect, and would soon claim the obedience, of the provinces. The society of the faithful bore a just proportion to the capital of the empire; and the

Pre-eminence
of the
metropolitan
churches.

Ambition of
the Roman
pontiff.

his epistles. Le Clerc, in a short Life of Cyprian (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. xii. p. 207-378), has laid him open with great freedom and accuracy.

¹¹⁹ If Novatus, Felicissimus, &c., whom the bishop of Carthage expelled from his church, and from Africa, were not the most detestable monsters of wickedness, the zeal of Cyprian must occasionally have prevailed over his veracity. For a very just account of these obscure quarrels, see Mosheim, p. 497-512.

¹²⁰ Mosheim, p. 269, 574. Dupin, *Antiquæ Eccles. Disciplin.* p. 19, 20.

¹²¹ Tertullian, in a distinct treatise, has pleaded against the heretics the right of prescription, as it was held by the apostolic churches.

Roman church was the greatest, the most numerous, and, in regard to the West, the most ancient of all the Christian establishments, many of which had received their religion from the pious labours of her missionaries. Instead of *one* apostolic founder, the utmost boast of Antioch, of Ephesus, or of Corinth, the banks of the Tiber were supposed to have been honoured with the preaching and martyrdom of the *two* most eminent among the apostles;¹²² and the bishops of Rome very prudently claimed the inheritance of whatsoever prerogatives were attributed either to the person or to the office of St. Peter.¹²³ The bishops of Italy and of the provinces were disposed to allow them a primacy of order and association (such was their very accurate expression) in the Christian aristocracy.¹²⁴ But the power of a monarch was rejected with abhorrence, and the aspiring genius of Rome experienced from the nations of Asia and Africa a more vigorous resistance to her spiritual than she had formerly done to her temporal dominion. The patriotic Cyprian, who ruled with the most absolute sway the church of Carthage and the provincial synods, opposed with resolution and success the ambition of the Roman pontiff, artfully connected his own cause with that of the eastern bishops, and, like Hannibal, sought out new allies in the heart of Asia.¹²⁵ If this Punic war was carried on without any effusion of blood, it was owing much less to the moderation than to the weakness of the contending prelates. Invectives and excommunications were *their* only weapons; and these, during the progress of the whole controversy, they hurled against each other with equal fury and devotion. The hard necessity of censuring either a pope or a saint and martyr distresses the modern Catholics whenever they are obliged to relate the particulars of a

¹²² The journey of St. Peter to Rome is mentioned by most of the ancients (see Eusebius, ii. 25), maintained by all the Catholics, allowed by some Protestants (see Pearson and Dodwell de Success. Episcop. Roman.), but has been vigorously attacked by Spanheim (Miscellanea Sacra, iii. 3). According to father Hardouin, the monks of the thirteenth century, who composed the *Æneid*, represented St. Peter under the allegorical character of the Trojan hero.*

¹²³ It is in French only that the famous allusion to St. Peter's name is exact. *Tu es Pierre, et sur cette pierre.*—The same is imperfect in Greek, Latin, Italian, &c., and totally unintelligible in our Teutonic languages.

¹²⁴ Irenæus adv. Hæreses, iii. 3; Tertullian de Præscription. c. 36; and Cyprian Epistol. 27, 55, 71, 75. Le Clerc (Hist. Eccles. p. 764) and Mosheim (p. 258, 578) labour in the interpretation of these passages. But the loose and rhetorical style of the fathers often appears favourable to the pretensions of Rome.

¹²⁵ See the sharp epistle from Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea, to Stephen, bishop of Rome, ap. Cyprian. Epistol. 75.

* It is quite clear that, strictly speaking, the church of Rome was not *founded* by either of these apostles. St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans proves undeniably the flourishing state of the church before his visit to the city; and many Roman Catholic

writers have given up the impracticable task of reconciling with chronology any visit of St. Peter to Rome before the end of the reign of Claudius, or the beginning of that of Nero.—M.

dispute in which the champions of religion indulged such passions as seem much more adapted to the senate or to the camp.¹²⁶

The progress of the ecclesiastical authority gave birth to the memorable distinction of the laity and of the clergy, which had been unknown to the Greeks and Romans.¹²⁷ The Laity and clergy. former of these appellations comprehended the body of the Christian people; the latter, according to the signification of the word, was appropriated to the chosen portion that had been set apart for the service of religion; a celebrated order of men which has furnished the most important, though not always the most edifying, subjects for modern history. Their mutual hostilities sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church, but their zeal and activity were united in the common cause, and the love of power, which (under the most artful disguises) could insinuate itself into the breasts of bishops and martyrs, animated them to increase the number of their subjects, and to enlarge the limits of the Christian empire. They were destitute of any temporal force, and they were for a long time discouraged and oppressed, rather than assisted, by the civil magistrate; but they had acquired, and they employed within their own society, the two most efficacious instruments of government, rewards and punishments; the former derived from the pious liberality, the latter from the devout apprehensions, of the faithful.

I. The community of goods, which had so agreeably amused the imagination of Plato,¹²⁸ and which subsisted in some degree among the austere sect of the Essenians,¹²⁹ was adopted for Oblations and revenue of the church. a short time in the primitive church. The fervour of the first proselytes prompted them to sell those worldly possessions which they despised, to lay the price of them at the feet of the apostles, and to content themselves with receiving an equal share out of the general distribution.¹³⁰ The progress of the Christian religion

¹²⁶ Concerning this dispute of the re-baptism of heretics, see the epistles of Cyprian, and the seventh book of Eusebius.

¹²⁷ For the origin of these words, see Mosheim, p. 141. Spanheim, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 633. The distinction of *Clerus* and *Laicus* was established before the time of Tertullian.

¹²⁸ The community instituted by Plato is more perfect than that which Sir Thomas More had imagined for his Utopia. The community of women, and that of temporal goods, may be considered as inseparable parts of the same system.

¹²⁹ Joseph. Antiquitat. xviii. 2 [c. 1, § 5, ed. Oxon. 1720]. Philo, de Vit. Contemplativ.

¹³⁰ See the Acts of the Apostles, c. 2, 4, 5, with Grotius's Commentary. Mosheim, in a particular dissertation, attacks the common opinion with very inconclusive arguments.^a

^a This is not the general judgment on Mosheim's learned dissertation. There is no trace in the latter part of the New Testament of this community of goods, and many distinct proofs of the contrary. All exhortations to almsgiving would have been unmeaning if property had been in common.—M.

relaxed, and gradually abolished, this generous institution, which, in hands less pure than those of the apostles, would too soon have been corrupted and abused by the returning selfishness of human nature : and the converts who embraced the new religion were permitted to retain the possession of their patrimony, to receive legacies and inheritances, and to increase their separate property by all the lawful means of trade and industry. Instead of an absolute sacrifice, a moderate proportion was accepted by the ministers of the Gospel ; and in their weekly or monthly assemblies every believer, according to the exigency of the occasion, and the measure of his wealth and piety, presented his voluntary offering for the use of the common fund.¹³¹ Nothing, however inconsiderable, was refused ; but it was diligently inculcated that, in the article of tithes, the Mosaic law was still of divine obligation ; and that, since the Jews, under a less perfect discipline, had been commanded to pay a tenth part of all that they possessed, it would become the disciples of Christ to distinguish themselves by a superior degree of liberality,¹³² and to acquire some merit by resigning a superfluous treasure, which must so soon be annihilated with the world itself.¹³³ It is almost unnecessary to observe that the revenue of each particular church, which was of so uncertain and fluctuating a nature, must have varied with the poverty or the opulence of the faithful, as they were dispersed in obscure villages, or collected in the great cities of the empire. In the time of the emperor Decius it was the opinion of the magistrates that the Christians of Rome were possessed of very considerable wealth, that vessels of gold and silver were used in their religious worship, and that many among their proselytes had sold their lands and houses to increase the public riches of the sect, at the expense, indeed, of their unfortunate children, who found themselves beggars because their parents had been saints.¹³⁴ We should listen

¹³¹ Justin Martyr, Apolog. Major, c. 89. Tertullian, Apolog. c. 39.

¹³² Irenæus ad Hæres. l. iv. c. 26, 34. Origen in Num. Hom. 11. Cyprian de Unitat. Eccles. Constitut. Apostol. l. ii. c. 34, 35, with the notes of Cotelerius. The Constitutions introduce this divine precept, by declaring that priests are as much above kings as the soul is above the body. Among the tithable articles, they enumerate corn, wine, oil, and wool. On this interesting subject, consult Prideaux's History of Tithes, and Fra Paolo delle Materie Beneficarie; two writers of a very different character.

¹³³ The same opinion, which prevailed about the year one thousand, was productive of the same effects. Most of the donations express their motive, "appropinquante mundi fine." See Mosheim's General History of the Church, vol. i. p. 457.

¹³⁴ Tum summa cura est fratribus
(Ut sermo testatur loquax)
Offerre fundis venditis,
Sestertiorum millia.
Addicta avorum prædia
Fœdis sub auctionibus,
Successor exhores genuit,
Sanctis egens parentibus.

with distrust to the suspicions of strangers and enemies; on this occasion, however, they receive a very specious and probable colour from the two following circumstances, the only ones that have reached our knowledge which define any precise sums or convey any distinct idea. Almost at the same period the bishop of Carthage, from a society less opulent than that of Rome, collected an hundred thousand sesterces (above eight hundred and fifty pounds sterling), on a sudden call of charity to redeem the brethren of Numidia, who had been carried away captives by the barbarians of the desert.¹³⁵ About an hundred years before the reign of Decius the Roman church had received, in a single donation, the sum of two hundred thousand sesterces from a stranger of Pontus, who proposed to fix his residence in the capital.¹³⁶ These oblations, for the most part, were made in money; nor was the society of Christians either desirous or capable of acquiring, to any considerable degree, the incumbrance of landed property. It had been provided by several laws, which were enacted with the same design as our statutes of mortmain, that no real estates should be given or bequeathed to any corporate body without either a special privilege or a particular dispensation from the emperor or from the senate;¹³⁷ who were seldom disposed to grant them in favour of a sect, at first the object of their contempt, and at last of their fears and jealousy. A transaction, however, is related under the reign of Alexander Severus, which discovers that the restraint was sometimes eluded or suspended, and that the Christians were permitted to claim and to possess lands within the limits of Rome itself.¹³⁸ The progress of Christianity, and the civil confusion of the empire, contributed to relax the severity of the laws; and, before the close of the third century, many considerable estates were

Hæc oculuntur abditis
Ecclesiarum in angulis.
Et summa pietas creditur
Nudare dulces liberos.

Prudent. *περὶ στερήσεων*. Hymn 2 [v. 73, sqq.

The subsequent conduct of the deacon Laurence only proves how proper a use was made of the wealth of the Roman church; it was undoubtedly very considerable; but Fra Paolo (c. 3) appears to exaggerate, when he supposes that the successors of Commodus were urged to persecute the Christians by their own avarice, or that of their Prætorian præfects.

¹³⁵ Cyprian, *Epistol.* 62.

¹³⁶ Tertullian de *Præscriptione*, c. 30.^a

¹³⁷ Diocletian gave a rescript, which is only a declaration of the old law:—"Collegium, si nullo speciali privilegio subnixum sit, hæreditatem capere non posse, dubium non est." Fra Paolo (c. 4) thinks that these regulations had been much neglected since the reign of Valerian.

¹³⁸ Hist. August. p. 131. [Lampr. Alex. Sever. c. 49.] The ground had been public; and was now disputed between the society of Christians and that of butchers.^b

^a This "stranger of Pontus" was no other than the heretic Marcion, who was afterwards expelled from the church, and against whom Tertullian wrote his well-known tract.—S.
^b Popinarii, rather victuallers.—M.

bestowed on the opulent churches of Rome, Milan, Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, and the other great cities of Italy and the provinces.

The bishop was the natural steward of the church; the public stock was intrusted to his care without account or control; the presbyters were confined to their spiritual functions, and the more dependent order of deacons was solely employed in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical revenue.¹³⁹ If we may give credit to the vehement declamations of Cyprian, there were too many among his African brethren who, in the execution of their charge, violated every precept, not only of evangelic perfection, but even of moral virtue. By some of these unfaithful stewards the riches of the church were lavished in sensual pleasures; by others they were perverted to the purposes of private gain, of fraudulent purchases, and of rapacious usury.¹⁴⁰ But as long as the contributions of the Christian people were free and unconstrained, the abuse of their confidence could not be very frequent, and the general uses to which their liberality was applied reflected honour on the religious society. A decent portion was reserved for the maintenance of the bishop and his clergy; a sufficient sum was allotted for the expenses of the public worship, of which the feasts of love, the *agapæ*, as they were called, constituted a very pleasing part. The whole remainder was the sacred patrimony of the poor. According to the discretion of the bishop, it was distributed to support widows and orphans, the lame, the sick, and the aged of the community; to comfort strangers and pilgrims, and to alleviate the misfortunes of prisoners and captives, more especially when their sufferings had been occasioned by their firm attachment to the cause of religion.¹⁴¹ A generous intercourse of charity united the most distant provinces, and the smaller congregations were cheerfully assisted by the alms of their more opulent brethren.¹⁴² Such an institution, which paid less regard to the merit than to the distress of the object, very materially conduced to the progress of Christianity. The pagans, who were actuated by a sense of humanity, while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence, of the new sect.¹⁴³ The prospect of immediate relief and of future protection allured into its hospitable bosom many of those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, of sickness, and of old age.

¹³⁹ Constitut. Apostol. ii. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 89 [p. 126, ed. Oxon.]. Epistol. 65. The charge is confirmed by the 19th and 20th canon of the council of Illiberis.

¹⁴¹ See the apologies of Justin, Tertullian, &c.

¹⁴² The wealth and liberality of the Romans to their most distant brethren is gratefully celebrated by Dionysius of Corinth, ap. Euseb. l. iv. c. 23.

¹⁴³ See Lucian in Peregrin. [c. 13.] Julian (Epist. 49) seems mortified that the Christian charity maintains not only their own, but likewise the heathen poor.

There is some reason likewise to believe that great numbers of infants who, according to the inhuman practice of the times, had been exposed by their parents, were frequently rescued from death, baptized, educated, and maintained by the piety of the Christians, and at the expense of the public treasure.¹⁴⁴

II. It is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits such among its members as reject or violate those regulations which have been established by general consent. Excommuni-
cation. In the exercise of this power the censures of the Christian church were chiefly directed against scandalous sinners, and particularly those who were guilty of murder, of fraud, or of incontinence; against the authors, or the followers, of any heretical opinions which had been condemned by the judgment of the episcopal order; and against those unhappy persons who, whether from choice or from compulsion, had polluted themselves after their baptism by any act of idolatrous worship. The consequences of excommunication were of a temporal as well as a spiritual nature. The Christian against whom it was pronounced was deprived of any part in the oblations of the faithful. The ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved: he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved; and as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind. The situation of these unfortunate exiles was in itself very painful and melancholy; but, as it usually happens, their apprehensions far exceeded their sufferings. The benefits of the Christian communion were those of eternal life; nor could they erase from their minds the awful opinion that to those ecclesiastical governors by whom they were condemned the Deity had committed the keys of Hell and of Paradise. The heretics, indeed, who might be supported by the consciousness of their intentions, and by the flattering hope that they alone had discovered the true path of salvation, endeavoured to regain, in their separate assemblies, those comforts, temporal as well as spiritual, which they no longer derived from the great society of Christians. But almost all those who had reluctantly yielded to the power of vice or idolatry were sensible of their fallen condition, and anxiously desirous of being restored to the benefits of the Christian communion.

¹⁴⁴ Such, at least, has been the laudable conduct of more modern missionaries, under the same circumstances. Above three thousand new-born infants are annually exposed in the streets of Pekin. See Le Comte, *Mémoires sur la Chine*, and the *Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptiens*, tom. i. p. 61.

With regard to the treatment of these penitents, two opposite opinions, the one of justice, the other of mercy, divided the primitive church. The more rigid and inflexible casuists refused them for ever, and without exception, the meanest place in the holy community which they had disgraced or deserted; and leaving them to the remorse of a guilty conscience, indulged them only with a faint ray of hope that the contrition of their life and death might possibly be accepted by the Supreme Being.¹⁴⁵ A milder sentiment was embraced, in practice as well as in theory, by the purest and most respectable of the Christian churches.¹⁴⁶ The gates of reconciliation and of heaven were seldom shut against the returning penitent; but a severe and solemn form of discipline was instituted, which, while it served to expiate his crime, might powerfully deter the spectators from the imitation of his example. Humbled by a public confession, emaciated by fasting, and clothed in sackcloth, the penitent lay prostrate at the door of the assembly, imploring with tears the pardon of his offences, and soliciting the prayers of the faithful.¹⁴⁷ If the fault was of a very heinous nature, whole years of penance were esteemed an inadequate satisfaction to the Divine justice; and it was always by slow and painful gradations that the sinner, the heretic, or the apostate was readmitted into the bosom of the church. A sentence of perpetual excommunication was, however, reserved for some crimes of an extraordinary magnitude, and particularly for the inexcusable relapses of those penitents who had already experienced and abused the clemency of their ecclesiastical superiors. According to the circumstances or the number of the guilty, the exercise of the Christian discipline was varied by the discretion of the bishops. The councils of Ancyra and Illiberis were held about the same time, the one in Galatia, the other in Spain; but their respective canons, which are still extant, seem to breathe a very different spirit. The Galatian, who after his baptism had repeatedly sacrificed to idols, might obtain his pardon by a penance of seven years; and if he had seduced others to imitate his example, only three years more were added to the term of his exile. But the unhappy Spaniard who had committed the same offence was deprived of the hope of reconciliation even in the article of death; and his idolatry was placed at the head of a list of seventeen other crimes,

¹⁴⁵ The Montanists and the Novatians, who adhered to this opinion with the greatest rigour and obstinacy, found *themselves* at last in the number of excommunicated heretics. See the learned and copious Mosheim, *Secul. ii. and iii.*

¹⁴⁶ Dionysius ap. Euseb. iv. 23. Cyprian, *de Lapsis.*

¹⁴⁷ Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part iii. c. 5. The admirers of antiquity regret the loss of this public penance.

against which a sentence no less terrible was pronounced. Among these we may distinguish the inexpressible guilt of calumniating a bishop, a presbyter, or even a deacon.¹⁴⁸

The well-tempered mixture of liberality and rigour, the judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments, according to the maxims of policy as well as justice, constituted the *human* strength of the church. The bishops, whose paternal care extended itself to the government of both worlds, were sensible of the importance of these prerogatives; and, covering their ambition with the fair pretence of the love of order, they were jealous of any rival in the exercise of a discipline so necessary to prevent the desertion of those troops which had enlisted themselves under the banner of the Cross, and whose numbers every day became more considerable. From the imperious declamations of Cyprian we should naturally conclude that the doctrines of excommunication and penance formed the most essential part of religion; and that it was much less dangerous for the disciples of Christ to neglect the observance of the moral duties than to despise the censures and authority of their bishops. Sometimes we might imagine that we were listening to the voice of Moses, when he commanded the earth to open, and to swallow up, in consuming flames, the rebellious race which refused obedience to the priesthood of Aaron; and we should sometimes suppose that we heard a Roman consul asserting the majesty of the republic, and declaring his inflexible resolution to enforce the rigour of the laws.^a

The dignity
of episcopal
government.

¹⁴⁸ See in Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclésiastique*, tom. ii. p. 304–313, a short but rational exposition of the canons of those councils which were assembled in the first moments of tranquillity after the persecution of Diocletian. This persecution had been much less severely felt in Spain than in Galatia; a difference which may, in some measure, account for the contrast of their regulations.

^a Gibbon has been accused of injustice to the character of Cyprian, as exalting the “censures and authority of the church above the observance of the moral duties.” *Felicissimus* had been condemned by a synod of bishops (*non tantum meâ, sed plurimorum coepiscoporum, sententia condemnatum*), on the charge not only of schism, but of embezzlement of public money, the debauching of virgins, and frequent acts of adultery. His violent menaces had extorted his readmission into the church, against which Cyprian protests with much vehemence: “*Ne pecuniâ commissis sibi fraudator, ne stuprator virginum, ne matrimoniorum multorum depopulator et corruptor, ultra adhuc sponsam Christi incorruptam præsentia suâ dedecore, et impudicâ atque incestâ contagione, violaret.*” See Chelsum’s Remarks, p. 134. If these charges against

Felicissimus were true, they were something more than “irregularities.” A Roman censor would have been a fairer subject of comparison than a consul. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the charge of adultery deepens very rapidly as the controversy becomes more violent. It is first represented as a single act, recently detected, and which men of character were prepared to substantiate: *adulterii etiam crimen accedit, quod patres nostri graves viri deprehendisse se nuntiaverunt, et probaturos se asseverarunt.* Epist. xxxviii. [Ep. xli. ed. Oxf.] The heretic has now darkened into a man of notorious and general profligacy. Nor can it be denied that, of the whole long epistle, very far the larger and the more passionate part dwells on the breach of ecclesiastical unity rather than on the violation of Christian holiness.—M.

“If such irregularities are suffered with impunity (it is thus that the bishop of Carthage chides the lenity of his colleague), “if such irregularities are suffered, there is an end of EPISCOPAL VIGOUR;¹⁴⁹ “an end of the sublime and divine power of governing the Church; “an end of Christianity itself.” Cyprian had renounced those temporal honours which it is probable he would never have obtained; but the acquisition of such absolute command over the consciences and understanding of a congregation, however obscure or despised by the world, is more truly grateful to the pride of the human heart than the possession of the most despotic power imposed by arms and conquest on a reluctant people.

In the course of this important, though perhaps tedious, inquiry, I have attempted to display the secondary causes which so efficaciously assisted the truth of the Christian religion. If among these causes we have discovered any artificial ornaments, any accidental circumstances, or any mixture of error and passion, it cannot appear surprising that mankind should be the most sensibly affected by such motives as were suited to their imperfect nature. It was by the aid of these causes—exclusive zeal, the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of miracles, the practice of rigid virtue, and the constitution of the primitive church—that Christianity spread itself with so much success in the Roman empire. To the first of these the Christians were indebted for their invincible valour, which disdained to capitulate with the enemy whom they were resolved to vanquish. The three succeeding causes supplied their valour with the most formidable arms. The last of these causes united their courage, directed their arms, and gave their efforts that irresistible weight which even a small band of well-trained and intrepid volunteers has so often possessed over an undisciplined multitude, ignorant of the subject and careless of the event of the war. In the various religions of Polytheism, some wandering fanatics of Egypt and Syria, who addressed themselves to the credulous superstition of the populace, were perhaps the only order of priests¹⁵⁰ that derived their whole support and credit from their sacerdotal profession, and were very deeply affected by a personal concern for the safety or prosperity of their tutelar deities. The ministers of Polytheism, both in Rome and in the provinces, were, for the most part, men of a noble birth and of an affluent fortune, who received, as an honourable distinction, the care of a celebrated temple or of a public sacrifice, exhibited, very frequently

Recapitulation of the five causes.

Weakness of Polytheism.

¹⁴⁹ Cyprian Epist. 69 [59].

¹⁵⁰ The arts, the manners, and the vices of the priests of the Syrian goddess are very humorously described by Apuleius, in the eighth book of his *Metamorphoses*.

at their own expense, the sacred games,¹⁵¹ and with cold indifference performed the ancient rites, according to the laws and fashion of their country. As they were engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, their zeal and devotion were seldom animated by a sense of interest, or by the habits of an ecclesiastical character. Confined to their respective temples and cities, they remained without any connection of discipline or government; and whilst they acknowledged the supreme jurisdiction of the senate, of the college of pontiffs, and of the emperor, those civil magistrates contented themselves with the easy task of maintaining in peace and dignity the general worship of mankind. We have already seen how various, how loose, and how uncertain were the religious sentiments of Polytheists. They were abandoned, almost without control, to the natural workings of a superstitious fancy. The accidental circumstances of their life and situation determined the object as well as the degree of their devotion; and as long as their adoration was successively prostituted to a thousand deities, it was scarcely possible that their hearts could be susceptible of a very sincere or lively passion for any of them.

When Christianity appeared in the world, even these faint and imperfect impressions had lost much of their original power. Human reason, which by its unassisted strength is incapable of perceiving the mysteries of faith, had already obtained an easy triumph over the folly of Paganism; and when Tertullian or Lactantius employ their labours in exposing its falsehood and extravagance, they are obliged to transcribe the eloquence of Cicero or the wit of Lucian. The contagion of these sceptical writings had been diffused far beyond the number of their readers. The fashion of incredulity was communicated from the philosopher to the man of pleasure or business, from the noble to the plebeian, and from the master to the menial slave who waited at his table, and who eagerly listened to the freedom of his conversation. On public occasions the philosophic part of mankind affected to treat with respect and decency the religious institutions of their country, but their secret contempt penetrated through the thin and awkward disguise; and even the people, when they discovered that their deities were rejected and derided by those whose rank or understanding they were accustomed to reverence, were filled with doubts and apprehensions concerning the truth of those doctrines to which they had yielded the

The scepticism of the Pagan world proved favourable to the new religion;

¹⁵¹ The office of Asiarch was of this nature, and it is frequently mentioned in Aristides, the Inscriptions, &c. It was annual and elective. None but the vainest citizens could desire the honour; none but the most wealthy could support the expense. See in the *Patres Apostol.* tom. ii. p. 200 [Epist. Eccl. Smyrn. de Martyrio Polycarpi, c. 12], with how much indifference Philip the Asiarch conducted himself in the martyrdom of Polycarp. There were likewise Bithyniarchs, Lyciarchs, &c.

most implicit belief. The decline of ancient prejudice exposed a very numerous portion of human kind to the danger of a painful and comfortless situation. A state of scepticism and suspense may amuse a few inquisitive minds. But the practice of superstition is so congenial to the multitude that, if they are forcibly awakened, they still regret the loss of their pleasing vision. Their love of the marvellous and supernatural, their curiosity with regard to future events, and their strong propensity to extend their hopes and fears beyond the limits of the visible world, were the principal causes which favoured the establishment of Polytheism. So urgent on the vulgar is the necessity of believing, that the fall of any system of mythology will most probably be succeeded by the introduction of some other mode of superstition. Some deities of a more recent and fashionable cast might soon have occupied the deserted temples of Jupiter and Apollo, if, in the decisive moment, the wisdom of Providence had not interposed a genuine revelation fitted to inspire the most rational esteem and conviction, whilst, at the same time, it was adorned with all that could attract the curiosity, the wonder, and the veneration of the people. In their actual disposition, as many were almost disengaged from their artificial prejudices, but equally susceptible and desirous of a devout attachment, an object much less deserving would have been sufficient to fill the vacant place in their hearts, and to gratify the uncertain eagerness of their passions. Those who are inclined to pursue this reflection, instead of viewing with astonishment the rapid progress of Christianity, will perhaps be surprised that its success was not still more rapid and still more universal.

It has been observed, with truth as well as propriety, that the conquests of Rome prepared and facilitated those of Christianity. In the second chapter of this work we have attempted to explain in what manner the most civilized provinces of Europe, Asia, and Africa were united under the dominion of one sovereign, and gradually connected by the most intimate ties of laws, of manners, and of language. The Jews of Palestine, who had fondly expected a temporal deliverer, gave so cold a reception to the miracles of the divine prophet, that it was found unnecessary to publish, or at least to preserve, any Hebrew gospel.¹⁵² The authentic histories of the actions of Christ were composed in the Greek language, at a considerable distance from

as well as
the peace
and union of
the Roman
empire.

¹⁵² The modern critics are not disposed to believe what the fathers almost unanimously assert, that St. Matthew composed a Hebrew gospel, of which only the Greek translation is extant. It seems, however, dangerous to reject their testimony.*

* The best Biblical scholars since Gibbon's time have maintained that the gospel of St. Matthew was originally written in Hebrew.—S.

Jerusalem, and after the Gentile converts were grown extremely numerous.¹⁵³ As soon as those histories were translated into the Latin tongue they were perfectly intelligible to all the subjects of Rome, excepting only to the peasants of Syria and Egypt, for whose benefit particular versions were afterwards made. The public highways, which had been constructed for the use of the legions, opened an easy passage for the Christian missionaries from Damascus to Corinth, and from Italy to the extremity of Spain or Britain; nor did those spiritual conquerors encounter any of the obstacles which usually retard or prevent the introduction of a foreign religion into a distant country. There is the strongest reason to believe that before the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine the faith of Christ had been preached in every province, and in all the great cities of the empire; but the foundation of the several congregations, the numbers of the faithful who composed them, and their proportion to the unbelieving multitude, are now buried in obscurity or disguised by fiction and declamation. Such imperfect circumstances, however, as have reached our knowledge concerning the increase of the Christian name in Asia and Greece, in Egypt, in Italy, and in the West, we shall now proceed to relate, without neglecting the real or imaginary acquisitions which lay beyond the frontiers of the Roman empire.

Historical
view of the
progress of
Christianity.

The rich provinces that extend from the Euphrates to the Ionian sea were the principal theatre on which the apostle of the Gentiles displayed his zeal and piety. The seeds of the Gospel, which he had scattered in a fertile soil, were diligently cultivated by his disciples; and it should seem that, during the two first centuries, the most considerable body of Christians was contained within those limits. Among the societies which were instituted in Syria, none were more ancient or more illustrious than those of Damascus, of Berea or Aleppo, and of Antioch. The prophetic introduction of the Apocalypse has described and immortalised the seven churches of Asia—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira,¹⁵⁴ Sardes, Laodicea, and Philadelphia; and their colonies were soon

In the East.

¹⁵³ Under the reigns of Nero and Domitian, and in the cities of Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Ephesus. See Mill, *Prolegomena ad Nov. Testament.*, and Dr. Lardner's fair and extensive collection, vol. xv.^a

¹⁵⁴ The Alogians (Epiphanius de Hæres. 51 [p. 455, ed. Paris, 1622]) disputed the genuineness of the Apocalypse, because the church of Thyatira was not yet founded. Epiphanius, who allows the fact, extricates himself from the difficulty by ingeniously supposing that St. John wrote in the spirit of prophecy. See Abauzit, *Discours sur l'Apocalypse*.

* This question has, it is well known, been most elaborately discussed since the time of Gibbon. The Preface to the trans-

lation of Schleiermacher's version of St. Luke contains a very able summary of the various theories.—M.

diffused over that populous country. In a very early period, the islands of Cyprus and Crete, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, gave a favourable reception to the new religion; and Christian republics were soon founded in the cities of Corinth, of Sparta, and of Athens.¹⁵⁵ The antiquity of the Greek and Asiatic churches allowed a sufficient space of time for their increase and multiplication; and even the swarms of Gnostics and other heretics serve to display the flourishing condition of the orthodox church, since the appellation of heretics has always been applied to the less numerous party. To these domestic testimonies we may add the confession, the complaints, and the apprehensions of the Gentiles themselves. From the writings of Lucian, a philosopher who had studied mankind, and who describes their manners in the most lively colours, we may learn that, under the reign of Commodus, his native country of Pontus was filled with Epicureans and *Christians*.¹⁵⁶ Within fourscore years after the death of Christ,¹⁵⁷ the humane Pliny laments the magnitude of the evil which he vainly attempted to eradicate. In his very curious epistle to the emperor Trajan he affirms that the temples were almost deserted, that the sacred victims scarcely found any purchasers, and that the superstition had not only infected the cities, but had even spread itself into the villages and the open country of Pontus and Bithynia.¹⁵⁸

Without descending into a minute scrutiny of the expressions or of the motives of those writers who either celebrate or lament the progress of Christianity in the East, it may in general be observed that none of them have left us any grounds from whence a just estimate might be formed of the real numbers of the faithful in those provinces. One circumstance, however, has been fortunately preserved, which seems to cast a more distinct light on this obscure but interesting subject. Under the reign of Theodosius, after Christianity had enjoyed, during more than sixty years, the sunshine of Imperial

¹⁵⁵ The epistles of Ignatius and Dionysius (ap. Euseb. iv. 23) point out many churches in Asia and Greece. That of Athens seems to have been one of the least flourishing.

¹⁵⁶ Lucian in Alexandro, c. 25. Christianity, however, must have been very unequally diffused over Pontus; since, in the middle of the third century, there were no more than seventeen believers in the extensive diocese of Neo-Cæsarea. See M. de Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclésiast.* tom. iv. p. 875, from Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, who were themselves natives of Cappadocia.^a

¹⁵⁷ According to the ancients, Jesus Christ suffered under the consulship of the two Gemini, in the year 29 of our present æra. Pliny was sent into Bithynia (according to Pagi) in the year 110.^b

¹⁵⁸ Plin. Epist. x. 97.

^a Gibbon forgot the conclusion of this story, that Gregory left only seventeen heathens in his diocese. The antithesis is suspicious, and both numbers may have been chosen to magnify the spiritual fame

of the wonder-worker.—M.

^b Pliny was sent into Bithynia in the year 103. See Clinton, *Fast. Rom.* vol. i. p. 89.—S.

favour, the ancient and illustrious church of Antioch consisted of one hundred thousand persons, three thousand of whom were supported out of the public oblations.¹⁵⁹ The splendour and dignity of the queen of the East, the acknowledged populousness of Cæsarea, Seleucia, and Alexandria, and the destruction of two hundred and fifty thousand souls in the earthquake which afflicted Antioch under the elder Justin,¹⁶⁰ are so many convincing proofs that the whole number of its inhabitants was not less than half a million, and that the Christians, however multiplied by zeal and power, did not exceed a fifth-part of that great city. How different a proportion must we adopt when we compare the persecuted with the triumphant church, the West with the East, remote villages with populous towns, and countries recently converted to the faith with the place where the believers first received the appellation of Christians! It must not, however, be dissembled that, in another passage, Chrysostom, to whom we are indebted for this useful information, computes the multitude of the faithful as even superior to that of the Jews and Pagans.¹⁶¹ But the solution of this apparent difficulty is easy and obvious. The eloquent preacher draws a parallel between the civil and the ecclesiastical constitution of Antioch; between the list of Christians who had acquired heaven by baptism, and the list of citizens who had a right to share the public liberality. Slaves, strangers, and infants were comprised in the former; they were excluded from the latter.

The extensive commerce of Alexandria, and its proximity to Palestine, gave an easy entrance to the new religion. It was at first embraced by great numbers of the Therapeutæ, or In Egypt. Essenians, of the lake Mareotis, a Jewish sect which had abated much of its reverence for the Mosaic ceremonies. The austere life of the Essenians, their fasts and excommunications, the community of goods, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth though not the purity of their faith, already offered a very lively image of the

¹⁵⁹ Chrysostom. Opera, tom. vii. p. 658, 810 [edit. Savil. ii. 422, 529].

¹⁶⁰ John Malala, tom. ii. p. 144 [ed. Oxon.; p. 420, ed. Bonn]. He draws the same conclusion with regard to the populousness of Antioch.

¹⁶¹ Chrysostom. tom. i. p. 592. I am indebted for these passages, though not for my inference, to the learned Dr. Lardner. Credibility of the Gospel History, vol. xii. p. 370.^a

^a The statements of Chrysostom with regard to the population of Antioch, whatever may be their accuracy, are perfectly consistent. In one passage he reckons the population at 200,000. In a second the Christians at 100,000. In a third he states that the Christians formed more

than half the population. Gibbon has neglected to notice the first passage, and has drawn his estimate of the population of Antioch from other sources. The 3000 maintained by alms were widows and virgins alone.—M.

primitive discipline.¹⁶² It was in the school of Alexandria that the Christian theology appears to have assumed a regular and scientific form; and when Hadrian visited Egypt, he found a church composed of Jews and of Greeks, sufficiently important to attract the notice of that inquisitive prince.¹⁶³ But the progress of Christianity was for a long time confined within the limits of a single city, which was itself a foreign colony, and till the close of the second century the predecessors of Demetrius were the only prelates of the Egyptian church. Three bishops were consecrated by the hands of Demetrius, and the number was increased to twenty by his successor Heraclas.¹⁶⁴ The body of the natives, a people distinguished by a sullen inflexibility of temper,¹⁶⁵ entertained the new doctrine with coldness and reluctance; and even in the time of Origen it was rare to meet with an Egyptian who had surmounted his early prejudices in favour of the sacred animals of his country.¹⁶⁶ As soon, indeed, as Christianity ascended the throne, the zeal of those barbarians obeyed the prevailing impulse; the cities of Egypt were filled with bishops, and the deserts of Thebais swarmed with hermits.

A perpetual stream of strangers and provincials flowed into the capacious bosom of Rome. Whatever was strange or odious, whoever was guilty or suspected, might hope, in the obscurity of that immense capital, to elude the vigilance of the law. In such a various conflux of nations, every teacher, either of truth or of falsehood, every founder, whether of a virtuous or a criminal association, might easily multiply his disciples or accomplices. The Christians of Rome, at the time of the accidental persecution of Nero, are represented by Tacitus as already amounting to a very great multitude,¹⁶⁷ and the language of that great historian is almost similar to the style employed by Livy, when he relates the introduction and the suppression of the rites of Bacchus. After the Bacchanals had awakened the severity of the senate, it was likewise apprehended that a very great multitude, as it were *another people*, had been

¹⁶² Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. ii. c. 20, 21, 22, 23, has examined with the most critical accuracy the curious treatise of Philo which describes the Therapeutæ. By proving that it was composed as early as the time of Augustus, Basnage has demonstrated, in spite of Eusebius (l. ii. c. 17), and a crowd of modern catholics, that the Therapeutæ were neither Christians nor monks. It still remains probable that they changed their name, preserved their manners, adopted some new articles of faith, and gradually became the fathers of the Egyptian Ascetics.

¹⁶³ See a letter of Hadrian in the *Augustan History*, p. 245. [*Vopisc. Saturn. c. 1.*]

¹⁶⁴ For the succession of Alexandrian bishops, consult Renaudot's *History*, p. 24, &c. This curious fact is preserved by the patriarch Eutychius (*Annal. tom. i. p. 332, Vers. Pocock*), and its internal evidence would alone be a sufficient answer to all the objections which Bishop Pearson has urged in the *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*.

¹⁶⁵ Ammian. Marcellin. xxii. 16.

¹⁶⁶ Origen contra Celsum, l. i. p. 40 [c. 52, tom. i. p. 368, ed. Bened.].

¹⁶⁷ *ingens multitudo* is the expression of Tacitus, xv. 44.

initiated into those abhorred mysteries. A more careful inquiry soon demonstrated that the offenders did not exceed seven thousand; a number indeed sufficiently alarming when considered as the object of public justice.¹⁶⁸ It is with the same candid allowance that we should interpret the vague expressions of Tacitus, and in a former instance of Pliny, when they exaggerate the crowds of deluded fanatics who had forsaken the established worship of the gods. The church of Rome was undoubtedly the first and most populous of the empire; and we are possessed of an authentic record which attests the state of religion in that city about the middle of the third century, and after a peace of thirty-eight years. The clergy, at that time, consisted of a bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, forty-two acolythes, and fifty readers, exorcists, and porters. The number of widows, of the infirm, and of the poor, who were maintained by the oblations of the faithful, amounted to fifteen hundred.¹⁶⁹ From reason, as well as from the analogy of Antioch, we may venture to estimate the Christians of Rome at about fifty thousand. The populousness of that great capital cannot perhaps be exactly ascertained; but the most modest calculation will not surely reduce it lower than a million of inhabitants, of whom the Christians might constitute at the most a twentieth part.¹⁷⁰

The western provincials appeared to have derived the knowledge of Christianity from the same source which had diffused among them the language, the sentiments, and the manners of Rome. In this more important circumstance, Africa, as well as Gaul, was gradually fashioned to the imitation of the capital. Yet notwithstanding the many favourable occasions which might invite the Roman missionaries to visit their Latin provinces, it was late before they passed either the sea or the Alps;¹⁷¹ nor can we discover in those great countries any assured traces either of faith or of persecution that ascend higher than the reign of the Antonines.¹⁷²

In Africa
and the
western
provinces.

¹⁶⁸ T. Liv. xxxix. 13, 15, 16, 17. Nothing could exceed the horror and consternation of the senate on the discovery of the Bacchanalians, whose depravity is described, and perhaps exaggerated, by Livy.

¹⁶⁹ Eusebius, l. vi. c. 43. The Latin translator (M. de Valois) has thought proper to reduce the number of presbyters to forty-four.

¹⁷⁰ This proportion of the presbyters and of the poor to the rest of the people was originally fixed by Burnet (Travels into Italy, p. 168), and is approved by Moyle (vol. ii. p. 151). They were both unacquainted with the passage of Chrysostom, which converts their conjecture almost into a fact.

¹⁷¹ *Serius trans Alpes, religione Dei suscepta.* Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. [p. 383, ed. Lugd. Bat. 1647]. With regard to Africa, see Tertullian ad Scapulam, c. 3. It is imagined that the Scyllitan martyrs were the first (Acta Sincera Ruinart. p. 34). One of the adversaries of Apuleius seems to have been a Christian. Apolog. p. 496, 497, edit. Delphin.

¹⁷² *Tum primum intra Gallias martyria visa.* Sulp. Severus, l. ii. [l. c.] These were the celebrated martyrs of Lyons. See Eusebius, v. i. Tillemont, Mém. Ecclésiast. tom. ii. p. 316. According to the Donatists, whose assertion is confirmed by

The slow progress of the Gospel in the cold climate of Gaul was extremely different from the eagerness with which it seems to have been received on the burning sands of Africa. The African Christians soon formed one of the principal members of the primitive church. The practice introduced into that province of appointing bishops to the most inconsiderable towns, and very frequently to the most obscure villages, contributed to multiply the splendour and importance of their religious societies, which during the course of the third century were animated by the zeal of Tertullian, directed by the abilities of Cyprian, and adorned by the eloquence of Lactantius. But if, on the contrary, we turn our eyes towards Gaul, we must content ourselves with discovering, in the time of Marcus Antoninus, the feeble and united congregations of Lyons and Vienne; and even as late as the reign of Decius we are assured that in a few cities only—Arles, Narbonne, Toulouse, Limoges, Clermont, Tours, and Paris—some scattered churches were supported by the devotion of a small number of Christians.¹⁷³ Silence is indeed very consistent with devotion; but as it is seldom compatible with zeal, we may perceive and lament the languid state of Christianity in those provinces which had exchanged the Celtic for the Latin tongue, since they did not, during the three first centuries, give birth to a single ecclesiastical writer. From Gaul, which claimed a just pre-eminence of learning and authority over all the countries on this side of the Alps, the light of the Gospel was more faintly reflected on the remote provinces of Spain and Britain; and if we may credit the vehement assertions of Tertullian, they had already received the first rays of the faith when he addressed his Apology to the magistrates of the emperor Severus.¹⁷⁴ But the obscure and imperfect origin of the western churches of Europe has been so negligently recorded, that, if we would relate the time and manner of their foundation, we must supply the silence of antiquity by those legends which avarice or superstition long afterwards dictated to the monks in the lazy gloom of their convents.¹⁷⁵ Of these holy romances, that of the apostle St. James can alone, by its singular extravagance, deserve to be mentioned. From a peaceful fisherman of the lake of

the tacit acknowledgment of Augustin, Africa was the last of the provinces which received the Gospel. Tillemont, *Mém. Ecclésiast.* tom. i. p. 754.

¹⁷³ *Raræ in aliquibus civitatibus ecclesiæ, paucorum Christianorum devotione, resurgerent.* Acta Sincera, p. 130. Gregory of Tours, l. i. c. 28. Mosheim, p. 207, 449. There is some reason to believe that, in the beginning of the fourth century, the extensive dioceses of Liege, of Treves, and of Cologne, composed a single bishopric, which had been very recently founded. See *Mémoires de Tillemont*, tom. vi. part i. p. 43, 411.

¹⁷⁴ The date of Tertullian's Apology is fixed, in a dissertation of Mosheim, to the year 198. [Rather 199.—S.]

¹⁷⁵ In the fifteenth century there were few who had either inclination or courage to question whether Joseph of Arimathea founded the monastery of Glastonbury, and whether Dionysius the Areopagite preferred the residence of Paris to that of Athens.

Gennesareth, he was transformed into a valorous knight, who charged at the head of the Spanish chivalry in their battles against the Moors. The gravest historians have celebrated his exploits; the miraculous shrine of Compostella displayed his power; and the sword of a military order, assisted by the terrors of the Inquisition, was sufficient to remove every objection of profane criticism.¹⁷⁶

The progress of Christianity was not confined to the Roman empire; and, according to the primitive fathers, who interpret facts by prophecy, the new religion, within a century after the death of its Divine Author, had already visited every part of the globe. "There exists not," says Justin Martyr, "a people, whether Greek or barbarian, or any other race of men, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in covered waggons, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of a crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things."¹⁷⁷ But this splendid exaggeration, which even at present it would be extremely difficult to reconcile with the real state of mankind, can be considered only as the rash sally of a devout but careless writer, the measure of whose belief was regulated by that of his wishes. But neither the belief nor the wishes of the fathers can alter the truth of history. It will still remain an undoubted fact that the barbarians of Scythia and Germany, who afterwards subverted the Roman monarchy, were involved in the darkness of paganism; and that even the conversion of Iberia, of Armenia, or of Æthiopia, was not attempted with any degree of success till the sceptre was in the hands of an orthodox emperor.¹⁷⁸ Before that time the various accidents of war and commerce might indeed diffuse an imperfect knowledge of the Gospel among the tribes of Caledonia,¹⁷⁹ and among the borderers of the Rhine, the Danube,

Beyond the limits of the Roman empire.

¹⁷⁶ The stupendous metamorphosis was performed in the ninth century. See Mariana (*Hist. Hispan.* l. vii. c. 13, tom. i. p. 285, edit. Hag. Com. 1733), who, in every sense, imitates Livy; and the honest detection of the legend of St. James by Dr. Geddes, *Miscellanies*, vol. ii. p. 221.

¹⁷⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dialog. cum Tryphon.* p. 341 [c. 117, p. 211, ed. Bened.]. Irenæus *adv. Hæres.* l. i. c. 10. Tertullian *adv. Jud.* c. 7. See Mosheim, p. 203.

¹⁷⁸ See the fourth century of Mosheim's *History of the Church*. Many, though very confused circumstances, that relate to the conversion of Iberia and Armenia, may be found in *Moses of Chorene*, l. ii. c. 78-89.^a

¹⁷⁹ According to Tertullian, the Christian faith had penetrated into parts of Britain inaccessible to the Roman arms. About a century afterwards, Ossian, the son of

^a Mons. St. Martin has shown that Armenia was the first nation that embraced Christianity. *Mémoires sur l'Arménie*, vol. i. p. 306, and notes to Le Beau. Gibbon, indeed, had expressed his intention of withdrawing the words "of

Armenia" from the text of future editions (*Vindication, Works*, iv. 577). He was bitterly taunted by Porson for neglecting or declining to fulfil his promise. Preface to *Letters to Travis*.—M.

and the Euphrates.¹⁸⁰ Beyond the last-mentioned river, Edessa was distinguished by a firm and early adherence to the faith.¹⁸¹ From Edessa the principles of Christianity were easily introduced into the Greek and Syrian cities which obeyed the successors of Artaxerxes; but they do not appear to have made any deep impression on the minds of the Persians, whose religious system, by the labours of a well-disciplined order of priests, had been constructed with much more art and solidity than the uncertain mythology of Greece and Rome.¹⁸²

From this impartial though imperfect survey of the progress of Christianity, it may perhaps seem probable that the number of its proselytes has been excessively magnified by fear on the one side, and by devotion on the other. According to the irreproachable testimony of Origen,¹⁸³ the proportion of the faithful was very inconsiderable, when compared with the multitude of an unbelieving world; but, as we are left without any distinct information, it is impossible to determine, and it is difficult even to conjecture, the real numbers of the primitive Christians. The most favourable calculation, however, that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the Cross before the important conversion of Constantine. But their habits of faith, of zeal, and of union, seemed to multiply their numbers; and the same causes which contributed to their future increase served to render their actual strength more apparent and more formidable.

Such is the constitution of civil society, that, whilst a few persons are distinguished by riches, by honours, and by knowledge, the body of the people is condemned to obscurity, ignorance, and poverty. The Christian religion, which addressed itself to the whole human race, must consequently collect a far greater

General
proportion
of Christians
and Pagans.

Whether
the first
Christians
were mean
and ignorant.

Fingal, is said to have disputed, in his extreme old age, with one of the foreign missionaries, and the dispute is still extant in verse, and in the Erse language. See Mr. Macpherson's Dissertation on the Antiquity of Ossian's Poems, p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ The Goths, who ravaged Asia in the reign of Gallienus, carried away great numbers of captives; some of whom were Christians, and became missionaries. See Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclésiast.* tom. iv. p. 44.

¹⁸¹ The legend of Abgarus, fabulous as it is, affords a decisive proof that many years before Eusebius wrote his history the greatest part of the inhabitants of Edessa had embraced Christianity. Their rivals, the citizens of Carrhæ, adhered, on the contrary, to the cause of Paganism, as late as the sixth century.

¹⁸² According to Bardesanes (ap. Euseb. *Præpar. Evangel.*), there were some Christians in Persia before the end of the second century. In the time of Constantine (see his epistle to Sapor [Euseb.], *Vit. l. iv. c. 13*) they composed a flourishing church. Consult Beausobre, *Hist. Critique du Manichéisme*, tom. i. p. 180, and the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* of Assemani.

¹⁸³ Origen contra Celsum, l. viii. p. 424 [c. 69, tom. i. p. 794, ed. Bened.].

number of proselytes from the lower than from the superior ranks of life. This innocent and natural circumstance has been improved into a very odious imputation, which seems to be less strenuously denied by the apologists than it is urged by the adversaries of the faith; that the new sect of Christians was almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace, of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women, of beggars and slaves, the last of whom might sometimes introduce the missionaries into the rich and noble families to which they belonged. These obscure teachers (such was the charge of malice and infidelity) are as mate in public as they are loquacious and dogmatical in private. Whilst they cautiously avoid the dangerous encounter of philosophers, they mingle with the rude and illiterate crowd, and insinuate themselves into those minds whom their age, their sex, or their education has the best disposed to receive the impression of superstitious terrors.¹⁸⁴

This unfavourable picture, though not devoid of a faint resemblance, betrays, by its dark colouring and distorted features, the pencil of an enemy. As the humble faith of Christ diffused itself through the world, it was embraced by several persons who derived some consequence from the advantages of nature or fortune. Aristides, who presented an eloquent apology to the emperor Hadrian, was an Athenian philosopher.¹⁸⁵ Justin Martyr had sought divine knowledge in the schools of Zeno, of Aristotle, of Pythagoras, and of Plato, before he fortunately was accosted by the old man, or rather the angel, who turned his attention to the study of the Jewish prophets.¹⁸⁶ Clemens of Alexandria had acquired much various reading in the Greek, and Tertullian in the Latin, language. Julius Africanus and Origen possessed a very considerable share of the learning of their times; and although the style of Cyprian is very different from that of Lactantius, we might almost discover that both those writers had been public teachers of rhetoric. Even the study of philosophy was at length introduced among the Christians, but it was not always productive of the most salutary effects; knowledge was as often the parent of heresy as of devotion, and the description which was designed for the followers of Artemon may, with equal propriety, be applied to the various sects that resisted the successors of the apostles. "They presume to alter the holy Scrip-

Some
exceptions
with regard
to learning;

¹⁸⁴ Minucius Felix, p. 8 [ed. Lugd. B. 1652], with Wowerus's notes. Celsus ap. Origen, l. iii. p. 138, 142 [c. 49, tom. i. p. 479, ed. Bened.]. Julian ap. Cyril. l. vi. p. 206, edit. Spanheim.

¹⁸⁵ Euseb. Hist. Eccles. iv. 3. Hieronym. Epist. 83. [Ep. 70, tom. i. p. 424, ed. Vallars.]

¹⁸⁶ The story is prettily told in Justin's Dialogues. Tillemont (Mém. Ecclésiast. tom. ii. p. 384), who relates it after him, is sure that the old man was a disguised angel

“tures, to abandon the ancient rule of faith, and to form their
 “opinions according to the subtle precepts of logic. The science of
 “the church is neglected for the study of geometry, and they lose
 “sight of heaven while they are employed in measuring the earth.
 “Euclid is perpetually in their hands. Aristotle and Theophrastus
 “are the objects of their admiration; and they express an uncommon
 “reverence for the works of Galen. Their errors are derived from
 “the abuse of the arts and sciences of the infidels, and they corrupt
 “the simplicity of the Gospel by the refinements of human reason.”¹⁸⁷

Nor can it be affirmed with truth that the advantages of birth
 and fortune were always separated from the profession of
 Christianity. Several Roman citizens were brought before
 the tribunal of Pliny, and he soon discovered that a great
 number of persons of *every order* of men in Bithynia had deserted
 the religion of their ancestors.¹⁸⁸ His unsuspected testimony may, in
 this instance, obtain more credit than the bold challenge of Tertullian,
 when he addresses himself to the fears as well as to the humanity of
 the proconsul of Africa, by assuring him that if he persists in his
 cruel intentions he must decimate Carthage, and that he will find
 among the guilty many persons of his own rank, senators and matrons
 of noblest extraction, and the friends or relations of his most intimate
 friends.¹⁸⁹ It appears, however, that about forty years afterwards
 the emperor Valerian was persuaded of the truth of this assertion,
 since in one of his rescripts he evidently supposes that senators,
 Roman knights, and ladies of quality, were engaged in the Christian
 sect.¹⁹⁰ The church still continued to increase its outward splendour
 as it lost its internal purity; and, in the reign of Diocletian, the
 palace, the courts of justice, and even the army, concealed a multi-
 tude of Christians, who endeavoured to reconcile the interests of the
 present with those of a future life.

And yet these exceptions are either too few in number, or too
 recent in time, entirely to remove the imputation of ignorance and
 obscurity which has been so arrogantly cast on the first proselytes
 of Christianity.^b Instead of employing in our defence the fictions of

¹⁸⁷ Eusebius, v. 28. It may be hoped that none, except the heretics, gave occasion to the complaint of Celsus (ap. Origen, l. ii. p. 77 [c. 27, tom. i. p. 411, ed. Bened.]), that the Christians were perpetually correcting and altering their Gospels.”

¹⁸⁸ Plin. Epist. x. 97. Fuerunt alii similis amentio, cives Romani . . . Multi enim omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexûs, et jam vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur.

¹⁸⁹ Tertullian ad Scapulam. Yet even his rhetoric rises no higher than to claim a tenth part of Carthage.

¹⁹⁰ Cyprian. Epist. 79 [80].

^a Origen states in reply that he knows of none who had altered the Gospels except the Marcionites, the Valentinians, and perhaps some followers of Lucanus.--M.

^b This incomplete enumeration ought to be increased by the names of several Pagans converted at the dawn of Christianity, and whose conversion weakens the

later ages, it will be more prudent to convert the occasion of scandal into a subject of edification. Our serious thoughts will suggest to us that the apostles themselves were chosen by Providence among the fishermen of Galilee, and that, the lower we depress the temporal condition of the first Christians, the more reason we shall find to admire their merit and success. It is incumbent on us diligently to remember that the kingdom of heaven was promised to the poor in spirit, and that minds afflicted by calamity and the contempt of mankind cheerfully listen to the divine promise of future happiness; while, on the contrary, the fortunate are satisfied with the possession of this world; and the wise abuse in doubt and dispute their vain superiority of reason and knowledge.

Christianity most favourably received by the poor and simple.

We stand in need of such reflections to comfort us for the loss of some illustrious characters, which in our eyes might have seemed the most worthy of the heavenly present. The names of Seneca, of the elder and the younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in which they flourished, and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life; their excellent understandings were improved by study; philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of the popular superstition; and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system. Their language or their silence equally discover their contempt for the growing sect which in their time had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians consider them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning.¹⁹¹

Rejected by some eminent men of the first and second centuries.

¹⁹¹ Dr. Lardner, in his first and second volumes of Jewish and Christian testimonies, collects and illustrates those of Pliny the younger, of Tacitus, of Galen, of Marcus Antoninus, and perhaps of Epictetus (for it is doubtful whether that philosopher means to speak of the Christians). The new sect is totally unnoticed by Seneca, the elder Pliny, and Plutarch.

reproach which the historian appears to support. Such are, the Proconsul Sergius Paulus, converted at Paphos (Acts xiii. 7-12); Dionysius, member of the Areopagus, converted, with several others, at Athens (Acts xvii. 34); several persons at the court of Nero (Philip. iv. 22),

Erastus, receiver at Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23); some Asiarchs (Acts xix. 31). As to the philosophers, we may add Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Hegesippus, Melito, Miltiades, Pantænus, Ammonius, &c., all distinguished for their genius and learning.—G.

It is at least doubtful whether any of these philosophers perused the apologies which the primitive Christians repeatedly published in behalf of themselves and of their religion; but it is much to be lamented that such a cause was not defended by abler advocates. They expose with superfluous wit and eloquence the extravagance of Polytheism. They interest our compassion by displaying the innocence and sufferings of their injured brethren. But when they would demonstrate the divine origin of Christianity, they insist much more strongly on the predictions which announced, than on the miracles which accompanied, the appearance of the Messiah. Their favourite argument might serve to edify a Christian or to convert a Jew, since both the one and the other acknowledge the authority of those prophecies, and both are obliged, with devout reverence, to search for their sense and their accomplishment. But this mode of persuasion loses much of its weight and influence when it is addressed to those who neither understand nor respect the Mosaic dispensation and the prophetic style.¹⁹² In the unskilful hands of Justin and of the succeeding apologists, the sublime meaning of the Hebrew oracles evaporates in distant types, affected conceits, and cold allegories; and even their authenticity was rendered suspicious to an unenlightened Gentile, by the mixture of pious forgeries which, under the names of Orpheus, Hermes, and the Sibyls,¹⁹³ were obtruded on him as of equal value with the genuine inspirations of Heaven. The adoption of fraud and sophistry in the defence of revelation too often reminds us of the injudicious conduct of those poets who load their *invulnerable* heroes with a useless weight of cumbersome and brittle armour.

But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, dæmons were expelled, and the

¹⁹² If the famous prophecy of the Seventy Weeks had been alleged to a Roman philosopher, would he not have replied in the words of Cicero, "Quæ tandem ista auguratio est, annorum potius quam aut mensium aut dierum?" De Divinatione, ii. 30. Observe with what irreverence Lucian (in Alexandro, c. 13), and his friend Celsus, ap. Origen (l. vii. [c. 14] p. 327), express themselves concerning the Hebrew prophets.

¹⁹³ The philosophers, who derided the more ancient predictions of the Sibyls, would easily have detected the Jewish and Christian forgeries, which have been so triumphantly quoted by the fathers, from Justin Martyr to Lactantius. When the Sibylline verses had performed their appointed task, they, like the system of the millennium, were quietly laid aside. The Christian Sibyl had unluckily fixed the ruin of Rome for the year 195, A. U. C. 948.

laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth,¹⁹⁴ or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire,¹⁹⁵ was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history.¹⁹⁶ It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect.¹⁹⁷ Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny¹⁹⁸ is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of a year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendour. This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets¹⁹⁹ and historians of that memorable age.²⁰⁰

General
silence con-
cerning the
darkness of
the Passion.

¹⁹⁴ The fathers, as they are drawn out in battle array by Dom Calmet (*Dissertations sur la Bible*, tom. iii. p. 295–308), seem to cover the whole earth with darkness, in which they are followed by most of the moderns.

¹⁹⁵ Origen ad Matth. c. 27, and a few modern critics, Beza, Le Clerc, Lardner, &c., are desirous of confining it to the land of Judea.

¹⁹⁶ The celebrated passage of Philegon is now wisely abandoned. When Tertullian assures the Pagans that the mention of the prodigy is found in Arcanis (not Archivis)^a vestris (see his *Apology*, c. 21), he probably appeals to the Sibylline verses, which relate it exactly in the words of the Gospel.

¹⁹⁷ Seneca *Quæst. Natur.* l. i. 15, vi. 1, vii. 17. Plin. *Hist. Natur.* l. ii.

¹⁹⁸ Plin. *Hist. Natur.* ii. 30.^b

¹⁹⁹ Virgil. *Georgic.* i. 466. Tibullus, ii. 5, 75. Ovid. *Metamorph.* xv. 782. Lucan. *Pharsal.* i. 535. The last of these poets places this prodigy before the civil war.

²⁰⁰ See a public epistle of M. Antony in Joseph. *Antiquit.* xiv. 12 [§3]. Plutarch in Cæsar. [c. 69] p. 471. Appian. *Bell. Civil.* l. iv. Dion Cassius, l. xlv. [c. 17] p. 431. Julius Obsequens, c. 128. His little treatise is an abstract of Livy's prodigies.

^a The reading preferred by Gibbon rests upon the authority of two MSS.; and on the whole, there appears to be, if not a preponderance, at least an equal amount, of evidence in favour of Archivis. See Wood-

ham's *Apology of Tertullian*, p. 78, note 26.—S.

^b This "distinct chapter" contains only two lines. The expression of Gibbon might mislead.—S.

CHAPTER XVI.*

THE CONDUCT OF THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE CHRISTIANS, FROM THE REIGN OF NERO TO THAT OF CONSTANTINE.

IF we seriously consider the purity of the Christian religion, the sanctity of its moral precepts, and the innocent as well as austere lives of the greater number of those who during the first ages embraced the faith of the Gospel, we should naturally suppose that so benevolent a doctrine would have been received with due reverence even by the unbelieving world; that the learned and the polite, however they might deride the miracles, would have esteemed the virtues of the new sect; and that the magistrates, instead of persecuting, would have protected an order of men who yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and government. If, on the other hand, we recollect the universal toleration of Polytheism, as it was invariably maintained by the faith of the people, the incredulity of philosophers, and the policy of the Roman senate and emperors, we are at a loss to discover what new offence the Christians had committed, what new provocation could exasperate the mild indifference of antiquity, and what new motives could urge the Roman princes, who beheld without concern a thousand forms of religion subsisting in peace under their gentle sway, to inflict a severe punishment on any part of their subjects who had chosen for themselves a singular but an inoffensive mode of faith and worship.

The religious policy of the ancient world seems to have assumed a

* The sixteenth chapter I cannot help considering as a very ingenious and specious, but very disgraceful extenuation of the cruelties perpetrated by the Roman magistrates against the Christians. It is written in the most contemptibly factious spirit of prejudice against the sufferers; it is unworthy of a philosopher and of a man of humanity. Let the narrative of Cyprian's death be examined. He had to relate the murder of an innocent man of advanced age, and in a station deemed venerable by a considerable body of the provincials of Africa, put to death because he refused to sacrifice to Jupiter. Instead of pointing the indignation of posterity against such an atrocious act of

tyranny, he dwells, with visible art, on the small circumstances of decorum and politeness which attended this murder, and which he relates with as much parade as if they were the most important particulars of the event.

Dr. Robertson has been the subject of much blame for his real or supposed lenity towards the Spanish murderers and tyrants in America. That the sixteenth chapter of Mr. G. did not excite the same or greater disapprobation, is a proof of the unphilosophical and indeed fanatical animosity against Christianity which was so prevalent during the latter part of the seventeenth [eighteenth] century.—*Muckintosh*: see Life, i. p. 244, 245.

more stern and intolerant character to oppose the progress of Christianity. About fourscore years after the death of Christ, his innocent disciples were punished with death by the sentence of a proconsul of the most amiable and philosophic character, and according to the laws of an emperor distinguished by the wisdom and justice of his general administration. The apologies which were repeatedly addressed to the successors of Trajan are filled with the most pathetic complaints that the Christians, who obeyed the dictates and solicited the liberty of conscience, were alone, among all the subjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auspicious government. The deaths of a few eminent martyrs have been recorded with care; and from the time that Christianity was invested with the supreme power, the governors of the church have been no less diligently employed in displaying the cruelty, than in imitating the conduct, of their Pagan adversaries. To separate (if it be possible) a few authentic as well as interesting facts from an undigested mass of fiction and error, and to relate, in a clear and rational manner, the causes, the extent, the duration, and the most important circumstances of the persecutions to which the first Christians were exposed, is the design of the present chapter.

The sectaries of a persecuted religion, depressed by fear, animated with resentment, and perhaps heated by enthusiasm, are seldom in a proper temper of mind calmly to investigate, ^{Inquiry into their motives.} or candidly to appreciate, the motives of their enemies, which often escape the impartial and discerning view even of those who are placed at a secure distance from the flames of persecution. A reason has been assigned for the conduct of the emperors towards the primitive Christians, which may appear the more specious and probable as it is drawn from the acknowledged genius of Polytheism. It has already been observed that the religious concord of the world was principally supported by the implicit assent and reverence which the nations of antiquity expressed for their respective traditions and ceremonies. It might therefore be expected that they would unite with indignation against any sect or people which should separate itself from the communion of mankind, and, claiming the exclusive possession of divine knowledge, should disdain every form of worship except its own as impious and idolatrous. The rights of toleration were held by mutual indulgence: they were justly forfeited by a refusal of the accustomed tribute. As the payment of this tribute was inflexibly refused by the Jews, and by them alone, the consideration of the treatment which they experienced from the Roman magistrates will serve to explain how far these speculations are justified by facts, and will lead us to discover the true causes of the persecution of Christianity.

Without repeating what has been already mentioned of the reverence of the Roman princes and governors for the temple of Jerusalem, we shall only observe that the destruction of the temple and city was accompanied and followed by every circumstance that could exasperate the minds of the conquerors, and authorise religious persecution by the most specious arguments of political justice and the public safety. From the reign of Nero to that of Antoninus Pius, the Jews discovered a fierce impatience of the dominion of Rome, which repeatedly broke out in the most furious massacres and insurrections. Humanity is shocked at the recital of the horrid cruelties which they committed in the cities of Egypt, of Cyprus, and of Cyrene, where they dwelt in treacherous friendship with the unsuspecting natives;¹ and we are tempted to applaud the severe retaliation which was exercised by the arms of the legions against a race of fanatics whose dire and credulous superstition seemed to render them the implacable enemies not only of the Roman government, but of human kind.² The enthusiasm of the Jews was supported by the opinion that it was unlawful for them to pay taxes to an idolatrous master, and by the flattering promise which they derived from their ancient oracles, that a conquering Messiah would soon arise, destined to break their fetters, and to invest the favourites of heaven with the empire of the earth. It was by announcing himself as their long-expected deliverer, and by calling on all the descendants of Abraham to assert the hope of Israel, that the famous Barchochebas collected a formidable army, with which he resisted during two years the power of the emperor Hadrian.³

Notwithstanding these repeated provocations, the resentment of the Roman princes expired after the victory, nor were their apprehensions continued beyond the period of war and danger. By the general indulgence of Polytheism, and by the mild temper of Antoninus Pius, the Jews were restored to their ancient privileges, and once more obtained the permission of circumcising their children, with the easy restraint that they should never confer on any foreign proselyte that distinguishing mark of the Hebrew

Tolerance of
the Jewish
religion.

¹ In Cyrene they massacred 220,000 Greeks; in Cyprus, 240,000; in Egypt a very great multitude. Many of these unhappy victims were sawn asunder, according to a precedent to which David had given the sanction of his example. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails like a girdle round their bodies. See Dion Cassius, l. lxxviii. [c. 32] p. 1145.

² Without repeating the well-known narratives of Josephus, we may learn from Dion (l. lxxix. [c. 14] p. 1162), that in Hadrian's war 580,000 Jews were cut off by the sword, besides an infinite number which perished by famine, by disease, and by fire.

³ For the sect of the Zealots see Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. i. c. 17; for the characters of the Messiah, according to the Rabbis, l. v. c. 11, 12, 13; for the actions of Barchochebas, l. vii. c. 12. [*Hist. of Jews*, iii. 115, &c.—M.]

race.⁴ The numerous remains of that people, though they were still excluded from the precincts of Jerusalem, were permitted to form and to maintain considerable establishments both in Italy and in the provinces, to acquire the freedom of Rome, to enjoy municipal honours, and to obtain at the same time an exemption from the burdensome and expensive offices of society. The moderation or the contempt of the Romans gave a legal sanction to the form of ecclesiastical police which was instituted by the vanquished sect. The patriarch, who had fixed his residence at Tiberias, was empowered to appoint his subordinate ministers and apostles, to exercise a domestic jurisdiction, and to receive from his dispersed brethren an annual contribution.⁵ New synagogues were frequently erected in the principal cities of the empire; and the sabbaths, the fasts, and the festivals, which were either commanded by the Mosaic law or enjoined by the traditions of the Rabbis, were celebrated in the most solemn and public manner.⁶ Such gentle treatment insensibly assuaged the stern temper of the Jews. Awakened from their dream of prophecy and conquest, they assumed the behaviour of peaceable and industrious subjects. Their irreconcilable hatred of mankind, instead of flaming out in acts of blood and violence, evaporated in less dangerous gratifications. They embraced every opportunity of overreaching the idolaters in trade, and they pronounced secret and ambiguous imprecations against the haughty kingdom of Edom.⁷

Since the Jews, who rejected with abhorrence the deities adored by their sovereign and by their fellow-subjects, enjoyed, however, the free exercise of their unsocial religion, there must have existed some other cause which exposed the disciples of Christ to those severities from which the posterity of Abraham was exempt. The difference between them is simple and obvious, but, according to the sentiments of antiquity, it was of the highest importance. The Jews were a *nation*,

The Jews were a people which followed, the Christians a sect which deserted, the religion of their fathers.

⁴ It is to Modestinus, a Roman lawyer (l. vi. regular.), that we are indebted for a distinct knowledge of the edict of Antoninus. See Casaubon ad Hist. August. p. 27.

⁵ See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. iii. c. 2, 3. The office of Patriarch was suppressed by Theodosius the younger.

⁶ We need only mention the Purim, or deliverance of the Jews from the rage of Haman, which, till the reign of Theodosius, was celebrated with insolent triumph and riotous intemperance. Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, l. vi. c. 17, l. viii. c. 6.

⁷ According to the false Josephus, Tsepho, the grandson of Esau, conducted into Italy the army of Æneas, king of Carthage. Another colony of Idumæans, flying from the sword of David, took refuge in the dominions of Romulus. For these, or for other reasons of equal weight, the name of Edom was applied by the Jews to the Roman empire.^a

^a The false Josephus is a romancer of very modern date, though some of these legends are probably more ancient. It may be worth considering whether many of the stories in the Talmud are not history in a figurative disguise, adopted from

prudence. The Jews might dare to say many things of Rome, under the significant appellation of Edom, which they feared to utter publicly. Later and more ignorant ages took literally, and perhaps embellished, what was intelligible among the

the Christians were a *sect*: and if it was natural for every community to respect the sacred institutions of their neighbours, it was incumbent on them to persevere in those of their ancestors. The voice of oracles, the precepts of philosophers, and the authority of the laws, unanimously enforced this national obligation. By their lofty claim of superior sanctity the Jews might provoke the Polytheists to consider them as an odious and impure race. By disdaining the intercourse of other nations they might deserve their contempt. The laws of Moses might be for the most part frivolous or absurd; yet, since they had been received during many ages by a large society, his followers were justified by the example of mankind, and it was universally acknowledged that they had a right to practise what it would have been criminal in them to neglect. But this principle, which protected the Jewish synagogue, afforded not any favour or security to the primitive church. By embracing the faith of the Gospel the Christians incurred the supposed guilt of an unnatural and unpardonable offence. They dissolved the sacred ties of custom and education, violated the religious institutions of their country, and presumptuously despised whatever their fathers had believed as true or had revered as sacred. Nor was this apostasy (if we may use the expression) merely of a partial or local kind; since the pious deserter who withdrew himself from the temples of Egypt or Syria would equally disdain to seek an asylum in those of Athens or Carthage. Every Christian rejected with contempt the superstitions of his family, his city, and his province. The whole body of Christians unanimously refused to hold any communion with the gods of Rome, of the empire, and of mankind. It was in vain that the oppressed believer asserted the inalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. Though his situation might excite the pity, his arguments could never reach the understanding, either of the philosophic or of the believing part of the Pagan world. To their apprehensions it was no less a matter of surprise that any individuals should entertain scruples against complying with the established mode of worship than if they had conceived a sudden abhorrence to the manners, the dress, or the language of their native country.^{8 a}

⁸ From the arguments of Celsus, as they are represented and refuted by Origen (l. v. [c. 59] p. 247-259), we may clearly discover the distinction that was made between the Jewish *people* and the Christian *sect*. See in the Dialogue of Minucius Felix (p. 5, 6) a fair and not inelegant description of the popular sentiments with regard to the desertion of the established worship.

generation to which it was addressed. Hist. of Jews, iii. 131.

The false Josephus has the inauguration of the emperor, with the seven electors and apparently the pope assisting at the coronation! Pref. page xxvi.—M.

"In all this there is doubtless much

truth; yet does not the more important difference lie on the surface? The Christians made many converts, the Jews but few. Had the Jewish been equally a proselytising religion, would it not have encountered as violent persecution?—M.

The surprise of the Pagans was soon succeeded by resentment, and the most pious of men were exposed to the unjust but dangerous imputation of impiety. Malice and prejudice concurred in representing the Christians as a society of atheists, who, by the most daring attack on the religious constitution of the empire, had merited the severest animadversion of the civil magistrate. They had separated themselves (they gloried in the confession) from every mode of superstition which was received in any part of the globe by the various temper of Polytheism: but it was not altogether so evident what deity, or what form of worship, they had substituted to the gods and temples of antiquity. The pure and sublime idea which they entertained of the Supreme Being escaped the gross conception of the Pagan multitude, who were at a loss to discover a spiritual and solitary God, that was neither represented under any corporeal figure or visible symbol, nor was adored with the accustomed pomp of libations and festivals, of altars and sacrifices.⁹ The sages of Greece and Rome, who had elevated their minds to the contemplation of the existence and attributes of the First Cause, were induced by reason or by vanity to reserve for themselves and their chosen disciples the privilege of this philosophical devotion.¹⁰ They were far from admitting the prejudices of mankind as the standard of truth, but they considered them as flowing from the original disposition of human nature; and they supposed that any popular mode of faith and worship which presumed to disclaim the assistance of the senses would, in proportion as it receded from superstition, find itself incapable of restraining the wanderings of the fancy and the visions of fanaticism. The careless glance which men of wit and learning condescended to cast on the Christian revelation served only to confirm their hasty opinion, and to persuade them that the principle, which they might have revered, of the Divine Unity, was defaced by the wild enthusiasm, and annihilated by the airy speculations, of the new sectaries. The author of a celebrated dialogue, which has been attributed to Lucian, whilst he affects to treat the mysterious subject of the Trinity in a style of ridicule and contempt, betrays his own ignorance of the weakness of human reason, and of the inscrutable nature of the Divine perfections.¹¹

⁹ *Cur nullas aras habent? templa nulla? nulla nota simulacra? . . . Unde autem, vel quis ille, aut ubi, Deus unicus, solitarius, destitutus?* Minucius Felix, p. 10. The Pagan interlocutor goes on to make a distinction in favour of the Jews, who had once a temple, altars, victims, &c.

¹⁰ It is difficult (says Plato) to attain, and dangerous to publish, the knowledge of the true God. See the *Théologie des Philosophes*, in the Abbé d'Olivet's French translation of Tully de *Naturâ Deorum*, tom. i. p. 275.

¹¹ The author of the *Philopatris* perpetually treats the Christians as a company of dreaming enthusiasts, *δαιμόνιοι αἰδέσιοι, αἰδέσσομενοὶ, ἀποθεωοῦντες*, &c.; and in one place manifestly alludes to the vision in which St. Paul was transported to the

It might appear less surprising that the founder of Christianity should not only be revered by his disciples as a sage and a prophet, but that he should be adored as a God. The Polytheists were disposed to adopt every article of faith which seemed to offer any resemblance, however distant or imperfect, with the popular mythology; and the legends of Bacchus, of Hercules, and of Æsculapius, had, in some measure, prepared their imagination for the appearance of the Son of God under a human form.¹² But they were astonished that the Christians should abandon the temples of those ancient heroes who, in the infancy of the world, had invented arts, instituted laws, and vanquished the tyrants or monsters who infested the earth; in order to choose for the exclusive object of their religious worship an obscure teacher, who, in a recent age, and among a barbarous people, had fallen a sacrifice either to the malice of his own countrymen, or to the jealousy of the Roman government. The Pagan multitude, reserving their gratitude for temporal benefits alone, rejected the inestimable present of life and immortality which was offered to mankind by Jesus of Nazareth. His mild constancy in the midst of cruel and voluntary sufferings, his universal benevolence, and the sublime simplicity of his actions and character, were insufficient, in the opinion of those carnal men, to compensate for the want of fame, of empire, and of success; and whilst they refused to acknowledge his stupendous triumph over the powers of darkness and of the grave, they misrepresented, or they insulted, the equivocal birth, wandering life, and ignominious death, of the divine Author of Christianity.¹³

The personal guilt which every Christian had contracted, in thus preferring his private sentiment to the national religion, was aggravated in a very high degree by the number and union of the criminals. It is well known, and has been already observed, that Roman policy viewed with the utmost jealousy and distrust any association among its subjects; and that the privileges of private corporations, though formed for the most harmless

The union and assemblies of the Christians considered as dangerous conspiracy.

third heaven. In another place, Trierphon, who personates a Christian, after deriding the gods of Paganism, proposes a mysterious oath:—

Ἐψιμένοντα θεόν, μέγαν, ἀμείροτον, οὐρανίωνα,
 Ἰὸν πατρός, πνεῦμα ἐκ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον,
 Ἐν ἐκ τριῶν, καὶ ἕξ ἑνὸς τρία.

Ἀριθμῶν μὲς διδάσκεις (is the profane answer of Critias), καὶ ἕρκος ἡ ἀριθμητικὴ· οὐκ οἶδα γὰρ σὶ λέγεις· Ἐν τρία, τρία ἓν!

¹² According to Justin Martyr (Apolog. Major, c. 70–85), the *dæmon*, who had gained some imperfect knowledge of the prophecies, purposely contrived this resemblance, which might deter, though by different means, both the people and the philosophers from embracing the faith of Christ.

¹³ In the first and second books of Origen, Celsus treats the birth and character of our Saviour with the most impious contempt. The orator Libanius praises Porphyry and Julian for confuting the folly of a sect which styles a dead man of Palestine, God, and the Son of God. Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. iii. 23

or beneficial purposes, were bestowed with a very sparing hand.¹⁴ The religious assemblies of the Christians, who had separated themselves from the public worship, appeared of a much less innocent nature: they were illegal in their principle, and in their consequences might become dangerous; nor were the emperors conscious that they violated the laws of justice, when, for the peace of society, they prohibited those secret and sometimes nocturnal meetings.¹⁵ The pious disobedience of the Christians made their conduct, or perhaps their designs, appear in a much more serious and criminal light; and the Roman princes, who might perhaps have suffered themselves to be disarmed by a ready submission, deeming their honour concerned in the execution of their commands, sometimes attempted, by rigorous punishments, to subdue this independent spirit, which boldly acknowledged an authority superior to that of the magistrate. The extent and duration of this spiritual conspiracy seemed to render it every day more deserving of his animadversion. We have already seen that the active and successful zeal of the Christians had insensibly diffused them through every province and almost every city of the empire. The new converts seemed to renounce their family and country, that they might connect themselves in an indissoluble band of union with a peculiar society, which everywhere assumed a different character from the rest of mankind. Their gloomy and austere aspect, their abhorrence of the common business and pleasures of life, and their frequent predictions of impending calamities,¹⁶ inspired the Pagans with the apprehension of some danger which would arise from the new sect, the more alarming as it was the more obscure. "Whatever," says Pliny, "may be the principle of their conduct, their inflexible obstinacy appeared deserving of punishment."¹⁷

The precautions with which the disciples of Christ performed the offices of religion were at first dictated by fear and necessity; but they were continued from choice. By imitating the awful secrecy which reigned in the Eleusinian mysteries, the Christians had flattered themselves that they should render their sacred institutions more respectable in the eyes of the Pagan world.¹⁸

¹⁴ The emperor Trajan refused to incorporate a company of 150 firemen for the use of the city of Nicomedia. He disliked all associations. See Plin. Epist. x. 42, 43.

¹⁵ The proconsul Pliny had published a general edict against unlawful meetings. The prudence of the Christians suspended their Agapæ; but it was impossible for them to omit the exercise of public worship.

¹⁶ As the prophecies of the Antichrist, approaching conflagration, &c., provoked those Pagans whom they did not convert, they were mentioned with caution and reserve; and the Montanists were censured for disclosing too freely the dangerous secret. See Mosheim, p. 413.

¹⁷ Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod faterentur (such are the words of Pliny), pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. [Epist. x. 97.]

¹⁸ See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 101, and Spanheim, *Remarques sur les Césars de Julien*, p. 468, &c.

But the event, as it often happens to the operations of subtile policy, deceived their wishes and their expectations. It was concluded that they only concealed what they would have blushed to disclose. Their mistaken prudence afforded an opportunity for malice to invent, and for suspicious credulity to believe, the horrid tales which described the Christians as the most wicked of human kind, who practised in their dark recesses every abomination that a depraved fancy could suggest, and who solicited the favour of their unknown God by the sacrifice of every moral virtue. There were many who pretended to confess or to relate the ceremonies of this abhorred society. It was asserted, "that a new-born infant, entirely covered over with flour, was presented, like some mystic symbol of initiation, to the knife of the proselyte, who unknowingly inflicted many a secret and mortal wound on the innocent victim of his error; that as soon as the cruel deed was perpetrated, the sectaries drank up the blood, greedily tore asunder the quivering members, and pledged themselves to eternal secrecy, by a mutual consciousness of guilt. It was as confidently affirmed that this inhuman sacrifice was succeeded by a suitable entertainment, in which intemperance served as a provocative to brutal lust; till, at the appointed moment, the lights were suddenly extinguished, shame was banished, nature was forgotten; and, as accident might direct, the darkness of the night was polluted by the incestuous commerce of sisters and brothers, of sons and of mothers."¹⁹

But the perusal of the ancient apologies was sufficient to remove even the slightest suspicion from the mind of a candid adversary. The Christians, with the intrepid security of innocence, appeal from the voice of rumour to the equity of the magistrates. They acknowledge that, if any proof can be produced of the crimes which calumny has imputed to them, they are worthy of the most severe punishment. They provoke the punishment, and they challenge the proof. At the same time they urge, with equal truth and propriety, that the charge is not less devoid of probability than it is destitute of evidence; they ask whether any one can seriously believe that the pure and holy precepts of the Gospel, which so frequently restrain the use of the most lawful enjoyments, should inculcate the practice of the most abominable crimes; that a large society should resolve to dishonour itself in the eyes of its own members; and that a great number of persons, of either sex, and every age and character, insensible to the fear of death or infamy,

¹⁹ See Justin Martyr, *Apolog.* i. 35 [c. 27? ed. Ben.], ii. 14 [c. 12, p. 97, ed. Ben.]. Athenagoras, in *Legation.* c. 27. Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 7, 8, 9. Minucius Felix, p. 9, 10, 30, 31. The last of these writers relates the accusation in the most elegant and circumstantial manner. The answer of Tertullian is the boldest and most vigorous.

should consent to violate those principles which nature and education had imprinted most deeply in their minds.²⁰ Nothing, it should seem, could weaken the force or destroy the effect of so unanswerable a justification, unless it were the injudicious conduct of the apologists themselves, who betrayed the common cause of religion, to gratify their devout hatred to the domestic enemies of the church. It was sometimes faintly insinuated, and sometimes boldly asserted, that the same bloody sacrifices, and the same incestuous festivals, which were so falsely ascribed to the orthodox believers, were in reality celebrated by the Marcionites, by the Carpocratians, and by several other sects of the Gnostics, who, notwithstanding they might deviate into the paths of heresy, were still actuated by the sentiments of men, and still governed by the precepts of Christianity.²¹ Accusations of a similar kind were retorted upon the church by the schismatics who had departed from its communion,²² and it was confessed on all sides that the most scandalous licentiousness of manners prevailed among great numbers of those who affected the name of Christians. A Pagan magistrate, who possessed neither leisure nor abilities to discern the almost imperceptible line which divides the orthodox faith from heretical pravity, might easily have imagined that their mutual animosity had extorted the discovery of their common guilt. It was fortunate for the repose, or at least for the reputation, of the first Christians, that the magistrates sometimes proceeded with more temper and moderation than is usually consistent with religious zeal, and that they reported, as the impartial result of their judicial inquiry, that the sectaries who had deserted the established worship appeared to them sincere in their professions and blameless in their manners, however they might incur, by their absurd and excessive superstition, the censure of the laws.²³

²⁰ In the persecution of Lyons, some Gentile slaves were compelled, by the fear of tortures, to accuse their Christian master. The church of Lyons, writing to their brethren of Asia, treat the horrid charge with proper indignation and contempt. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. i.

²¹ See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35 [c. 27? ed. Ben.]. Irenæus adv. Hæres. i. 24. Clemens Alexandrin. Stromat. l. iii. p. 438 [c. 2, p. 514, ed. Oxon. 1715]. Euseb. iv. 8. It would be tedious and disgusting to relate all that the succeeding writers have imagined, all that Epiphanius has received, and all that Tillemont has copied. M. de Beausobre (Hist. du Manichéisme, l. ix. c. 8, 9) has exposed, with great spirit, the disingenuous arts of Augustin and Pope Leo I.

²² When Tertullian became a Montanist, he aspersed the morals of the church which he had so resolutely defended. "Sed majoris est Agape, quia per hanc adolescentes 'tui cum sororibus dormiunt. Appendices scilicet gula lascivia et luxuria.'" De Jejuniis, c. 17. The 35th canon of the council of Illiberis provides against the scandals which too often polluted the vigils of the church, and disgraced the Christian name in the eyes of unbelievers.

²³ Tertullian (Apolog. c. 2) expatiates on the fair and honourable testimony of Pliny, with much reason, and some declamation

History, which undertakes to record the transactions of the past, for the instruction of future ages, would ill deserve that honourable office, if she condescended to plead the cause of tyrants, or to justify the maxims of persecution. It must, however, be acknowledged that the conduct of the emperors who appeared the least favourable to the primitive church is by no means so criminal as that of modern sovereigns who have employed the arm of violence and terror against the religious opinions of any part of their subjects. From their reflections, or even from their own feelings, a Charles V. or a Louis XIV. might have acquired a just knowledge of the rights of conscience, of the obligation of faith, and of the innocence of error. But the princes and magistrates of ancient Rome were strangers to those principles which inspired and authorised the inflexible obstinacy of the Christians in the cause of truth, nor could they themselves discover in their own breasts any motive which would have prompted them to refuse a legal, and as it were a natural, submission to the sacred institutions of their country. The same reason which contributes to alleviate the guilt, must have tended to abate the rigour, of their persecutions. As they were actuated, not by the furious zeal of bigots, but by the temperate policy of legislators, contempt must often have relaxed, and humanity must frequently have suspended, the execution of those laws which they enacted against the humble and obscure followers of Christ. From the general view of their character and motives we might naturally conclude:

- I. That a considerable time elapsed before they considered the new sectaries as an object deserving of the attention of government.
- II. That in the conviction of any of their subjects who were accused of so very singular a crime, they proceeded with caution and reluctance.
- III. That they were moderate in the use of punishments; and
- IV. That the afflicted church enjoyed many intervals of peace and tranquillity. Notwithstanding the careless indifference which the most copious and the most minute of the Pagan writers have shown to the affairs of the Christians,²⁴ it may still be in our power to confirm each of these probable suppositions by the evidence of authentic facts.

²⁴ In the various compilation of the Augustan History (a part of which was composed under the reign of Constantine) there are not six lines which relate to the Christians; nor has the diligence of Xiphilin discovered their name in the large history of Dion Cassius.^a

^a The greater part of the Augustan History is dedicated to Diocletian. This may account for the silence of its authors concerning Christianity. The notices that occur are almost all in the Lives composed under the reign of Constantine. It may fairly be concluded, from the language

which he puts into the mouth of Mæcenas, that Dion was an enemy to all innovations in religion. In fact, when the silence of Pagan historians is noticed, it should be remembered how meagre and mutilated are all the extant histories of the period. —M.

I. By the wise dispensation of Providence a mysterious veil was cast over the infancy of the church, which, till the faith of the Christians was matured, and their numbers were multiplied, served to protect them not only from the malice but even from the knowledge of the Pagan world. The slow and gradual abolition of the Mosaic ceremonies afforded a safe and innocent disguise to the more early proselytes of the Gospel. As they were for the greater part of the race of Abraham, they were distinguished by the peculiar mark of circumcision, offered up their devotions in the Temple of Jerusalem till its final destruction, and received both the Law and the Prophets as the genuine inspirations of the Deity. The Gentile converts who by a spiritual adoption had been associated to the hope of Israel, were likewise confounded under the garb and appearance of Jews;²⁵ and as the Polytheists paid less regard to articles of faith than to the external worship, the new sect, which carefully concealed, or faintly announced, its future greatness and ambition, was permitted to shelter itself under the general toleration which was granted to an ancient and celebrated people in the Roman empire. It was not long, perhaps, before the Jews themselves, animated with a fiercer zeal and a more jealous faith, perceived the gradual separation of their Nazarene brethren from the doctrine of the synagogue: and they would gladly have extinguished the dangerous heresy in the blood of its adherents. But the decrees of Heaven had already disarmed their malice; and though they might sometimes exert the licentious privilege of sedition, they no longer possessed the administration of criminal justice; nor did they find it easy to infuse into the calm breast of a Roman magistrate the rancour of their own zeal and prejudice. The provincial governors declared themselves ready to listen to any accusation that might affect the public safety; but as soon as they were informed that it was a question not of facts but of words, a dispute relating only to the interpretation of the Jewish laws and prophecies, they deemed it unworthy of the majesty of Rome seriously to discuss the obscure differences which might arise among a barbarous and superstitious people. The innocence of the first Christians was protected by ignorance and contempt; and the tribunal of the Pagan magistrate often proved their most assured refuge against the fury of the synagogue.²⁶ If, indeed, we were disposed to adopt the traditions of a too credulous antiquity, we might relate the distant peregrinations, the wonderful achievements, and the various deaths of the

They neglected the Christians as a sect of Jews.

²⁵ An obscure passage of Suetonius (in Claud. c. 25) may seem to offer a proof how strangely the Jews and Christians of Rome were confounded with each other.

²⁶ See, in the xviiith and xxvth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, the behaviour of Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, and of Festus, procurator of Judæa.

twelve apostles: but a more accurate inquiry will induce us to doubt whether any of those persons who had been witnesses to the miracles of Christ were permitted, beyond the limits of Palestine, to seal with their blood the truth of their testimony.²⁷ From the ordinary term of human life, it may very naturally be presumed that most of them were deceased before the discontent of the Jews broke out into that furious war which was terminated only by the ruin of Jerusalem. During a long period, from the death of Christ to that memorable rebellion, we cannot discover any traces of Roman intolerance, unless they are to be found in the sudden, the transient, but the cruel persecution, which was exercised by Nero against the Christians of the capital, thirty-five years after the former, and only two years before the latter, of those great events. The character of the philosophic historian, to whom we are principally indebted for the knowledge of this singular transaction, would alone be sufficient to recommend it to our most attentive consideration.

In the tenth year of the reign of Nero the capital of the empire was afflicted by a fire which raged beyond the memory or example of former ages.²⁸ The monuments of Grecian art and of Roman virtue, the trophies of the Punic and Gallic wars, the most holy temples, and the most splendid palaces were involved in one common destruction. Of the fourteen regions or quarters into which Rome was divided, four only subsisted entire, three were levelled with the ground, and the remaining seven, which had experienced the fury of the flames, displayed a melancholy prospect of ruin and desolation. The vigilance of government appears not to have neglected any of the precautions which might alleviate the sense of so dreadful a calamity. The Imperial gardens were thrown open to the distressed multitude, temporary buildings were erected for their accommodation, and a plentiful supply of corn and provisions was distributed at a very moderate price.²⁹ The most generous policy seemed to have dictated the edicts which regulated the disposition of the streets and the construction of private houses; and, as it usually happens in an age of prosperity, the conflagration of Rome, in the course of a few years, produced a new city, more regular and more beautiful than the former. But all the prudence

²⁷ In the time of Tertullian and Clemens of Alexandria the glory of martyrdom was confined to St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. It was gradually bestowed on the rest of the apostles by the more recent Greeks, who prudently selected for the theatre of their preaching and sufferings some remote country beyond the limits of the Roman empire. See Mosheim, p. 81; and Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclésiastiques*, tom. i. part iii.

²⁸ Tacit. *Annal.* xv. 38-44. Sueton. in *Neron.* c. 38. Dion Cassius, l. lxii. [c. 16] p. 1014. Orosius, vii. 7.

²⁹ The price of wheat (probably of the *modius*) was reduced as low as *terni Nummi* which would be equivalent to about fifteen shillings the English quarter.

and humanity affected by Nero on this occasion were insufficient to preserve him from the popular suspicion. Every crime might be imputed to the assassin of his wife and mother; nor could the prince who prostituted his person and dignity on the theatre be deemed incapable of the most extravagant folly. The voice of rumour accused the emperor as the incendiary of his own capital; and, as the most incredible stories are the best adapted to the genius of an enraged people, it was gravely reported, and firmly believed, that Nero, enjoying the calamity which he had occasioned, amused himself with singing to his lyre the destruction of ancient Troy.³⁰ To divert a suspicion which the power of despotism was unable to suppress, the emperor resolved to substitute in his own place some fictitious criminals. "With this view (continues Tacitus) he inflicted the most exquisite tortures on those men who, under the vulgar appellation of Christians, were already branded with deserved infamy. They derived their name and origin from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, had suffered death by the sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate.³¹ For a while this dire superstition was checked, but it again burst forth; and not only spread itself over Judæa, the first seat of this mischievous sect, but was even introduced into Rome, the common asylum which receives and protects whatever is impure, whatever is atrocious. The confessions of those who were seized discovered a great multitude of their accomplices, and they were all convicted, not so much for the crime of setting fire to the city as for their hatred of human kind.³² They died in torments, and their torments were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed

Cruel punishment of the Christians, as the incendiaries of the city.

³⁰ We may observe that the rumour is mentioned by Tacitus with a very becoming distrust and hesitation, whilst it is greedily transcribed by Suetonius, and solemnly confirmed by Dion.

³¹ This testimony is alone sufficient to expose the anachronism of the Jews, who place the birth of Christ near a century sooner. (Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. v. c. 14, 15.) We may learn from Josephus (*Antiquitat.* xviii. 3 [c. 2, § 2, ed. Oxon. 1720]) that the procuratorship of Pilate corresponded with the last ten years of Tiberius, A.D. 27–37. As to the particular time of the death of Christ, a very early tradition fixed it to the 25th of March, A.D. 29, under the consulship of the two Gemini (Tertullian *adv. Judæos*, c. 8). This date, which is adopted by Pagi, Cardinal Norris, and Le Clerc, seems at least as probable as the vulgar æra, which is placed (I know not from what conjectures) four years later.

³² *Odio humani generis convicti*. These words may either signify the hatred of mankind towards the Christians, or the hatred of the Christians towards mankind. I have preferred the latter sense, as the most agreeable to the style of Tacitus, and to the popular error, of which a precept of the Gospel (see Luke xiv. 26) had been, perhaps, the innocent occasion. My interpretation is justified by the authority of Lipsius; of the Italian, the French, and the English translators of Tacitus; of Mosheim (p. 102), of Le Clerc (*Historia Ecclesiast.* p. 427), of Dr. Lardner (*Testimonies*, vol. i. p. 345), and of the Bishop of Gloucester (*Divine Legation*, vol. iii. p. 38). But as the word *convicti* does not unite very happily with the rest of the sentence, James Gronovius has preferred the reading of *conjuncti*, which is authorised by the valuable MS. of Florence.

“ on crosses ; others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed
 “ to the fury of dogs ; others again, smeared over with combustible
 “ materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the
 “ night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy
 “ spectacle, which was accompanied with a horse-race, and honoured
 “ with the presence of the emperor, who mingled with the populace
 “ in the dress and attitude of a charioteer. The guilt of the Chris-
 “ tians deserved indeed the most exemplary punishment, but the
 “ public abhorrence was changed into commiseration, from the
 “ opinion that those unhappy wretches were sacrificed, not so much to
 “ the public welfare as to the cruelty of a jealous tyrant.”³³ Those
 who survey with a curious eye the revolutions of mankind may
 observe that the gardens and circus of Nero on the Vatican, which
 were polluted with the blood of the first Christians, have been ren-
 dered still more famous by the triumph and by the abuse of the
 persecuted religion. On the same spot³⁴ a temple, which far sur-
 passes the ancient glories of the Capitol, has been since erected by
 the Christian Pontiffs, who, deriving their claim of universal dominion
 from an humble fisherman of Galilee, have succeeded to the throne of
 the Cæsars, given laws to the barbarian conquerors of Rome, and
 extended their spiritual jurisdiction from the coast of the Baltic to the
 shores of the Pacific Ocean.

But it would be improper to dismiss this account of Nero’s perse-
 cution till we have made some observations that may serve to remove
 the difficulties with which it is perplexed, and to throw some light on
 the subsequent history of the church.

1. The most sceptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of
 this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated
 passage of Tacitus. The former is confirmed by the diligent
 and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which
 Nero inflicted on the Christians, a sect of men who had
 embraced a new and criminal superstition.³⁵ The latter
 may be proved by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts ; by
 the inimitable character of the style of Tacitus ; by his reputation,
 which guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud ; and
 by the purport of his narration, which accused the first Christians of
 the most atrocious crimes, without insinuating that they possessed
 any miraculous or even magical powers above the rest of mankind.³⁶

Remarks on
 the passage
 of Tacitus
 relative to
 the persecu-
 tion of the
 Christians
 by Nero.

³³ Tacit. Annal. xv. 44.

³⁴ Nardini Roma Antica, p. 487. Donatus de Româ Antiquâ, l. iii. p. 449.

³⁵ Sueton. in Nerone, c. 16. The epithet of *malefica*, which some sagacious com-
 mentators have translated *magical*, is considered by the more rational Mosheim as only
 synonymous to the *exitiabilis* of Tacitus.

³⁶ The passage concerning Jesus Christ which was inserted into the text of Josephus
 between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, may furnish an example of no

2. Notwithstanding it is probable that Tacitus was born some years before the fire of Rome,³⁷ he could derive only from reading and conversation the knowledge of an event which happened during his infancy. Before he gave himself to the public he calmly waited till his genius had attained its full maturity, and he was more than forty years of age when a grateful regard for the memory of the virtuous Agricola extorted from him the most early of those historical compositions which will delight and instruct the most distant posterity. After making a trial of his strength in the life of Agricola, and the description of Germany, he conceived, and at length executed, a more arduous work,—the history of Rome, in thirty books, from the fall of Nero to the accession of Nerva. The administration of Nerva introduced an age of justice and prosperity, which Tacitus had destined for the occupation of his old age;³⁸ but when he took a nearer view of his subject, judging, perhaps, that it was a more honourable or a less invidious office to record the vices of past tyrants than to celebrate the virtues of a reigning monarch, he chose rather to relate, under the form of annals, the actions of the four immediate successors of Augustus. To collect, to dispose, and to adorn a series of fourscore years in an immortal work, every sentence of which is pregnant with the deepest observations and the most lively images, was an undertaking sufficient to exercise the genius of Tacitus himself during the greatest part of his life. In the last years of the reign of Trajan, whilst the victorious monarch extended the power of Rome beyond its ancient limits, the historian was describing, in the second and fourth books of his *Annals*, the tyranny of Tiberius;³⁹ and the emperor Hadrian must have succeeded to the throne before Tacitus, in the regular prosecution of his work, could relate the fire of the capital and the cruelty of Nero towards the unfortunate Christians. At the distance of sixty years it was the duty of the

vulgar forgery. The accomplishment of the prophecies, the virtues, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus, are distinctly related. Josephus acknowledges that he was the Messiah, and hesitates whether he should call him a man. If any doubt can still remain concerning this celebrated passage, the reader may examine the pointed objections of Le Fevre (*Havercamp. Joseph. tom. ii. p. 267-273*), the laboured answers of Daubuz (*p. 187-232*), and the masterly reply (*Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. vii. p. 237-288*) of an anonymous critic, whom I believe to have been the learned Abbé de Longuerue.^a

³⁷ See the lives of Tacitus by Lipsius and the Abbé de la Bleterie, *Dictionnaire de Bayle à l'article TACITE*, and Fabricius, *Biblioth. Latin. tom. ii. p. 386*, edit. Ernest.

³⁸ *Principatum Divi Nervæ, et imperium Trajani, uberiorem securioremque materiam, senectuti seposui.* Tacit. Hist. i. l.

³⁹ See Tacit. *Annal. ii. 61, iv. 4.*

^a The modern editor of Eusebius, Heinen, has adopted, and ably supported, a notion, which had before suggested itself to the editor, that this passage is not alto-

gether a forgery, but interpolated with many additional clauses. Heinen has endeavoured to disengage the original text from the foreign and more recent matter. —M.

annalist to adopt the narratives of contemporaries ; but it was natural for the philosopher to indulge himself in the description of the origin, the progress, and the character of the new sect, not so much according to the knowledge or prejudices of the age of Nero, as according to those of the time of Hadrian. 3. Tacitus very frequently trusts to the curiosity or reflection of his readers to supply those intermediate circumstances and ideas which, in his extreme conciseness, he has thought proper to suppress. We may therefore presume to imagine some probable cause which could direct the cruelty of Nero against the Christians of Rome, whose obscurity, as well as innocence, should have shielded them from his indignation, and even from his notice. The Jews, who were numerous in the capital and oppressed in their own country, were a much fitter object for the suspicions of the emperor and of the people : nor did it seem unlikely that a vanquished nation, who already discovered their abhorrence of the Roman yoke, might have recourse to the most atrocious means of gratifying their implacable revenge. But the Jews possessed very powerful advocates in the palace, and even in the heart of the tyrant ; his wife and mistress, the beautiful Poppæa, and a favourite player of the race of Abraham, who had already employed their intercession on behalf of the obnoxious people.⁴⁰ In their room it was necessary to offer some other victims, and it might easily be suggested that, although the genuine followers of Moses were innocent of the fire of Rome, there had arisen among them a new and pernicious sect of GALILÆANS, which was capable of the most horrid crimes. Under the appellation of GALILÆANS two distinctions of men were confounded, the most opposite to each other in their manners and principles ; the disciples who had embraced the faith of Jesus of Nazareth,⁴¹ and the zealots who had followed the standard of Judas the Gaulonite.⁴² The former were the friends, the latter were the enemies, of human kind ; and the only resemblance between them consisted in the same inflexible constancy which, in the defence of their cause, rendered them insensible of death and tortures. The followers of Judas, who impelled their countrymen into rebellion, were soon buried under the ruins of Jerusalem ; whilst

⁴⁰ The player's name was Aliturus. Through the same channel, Josephus (*de Vita sua*, c. 3), about two years before, had obtained the pardon and release of some Jewish priests who were prisoners at Rome.

⁴¹ The learned Dr. Lardner (*Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, vol. ii. p. 102, 103) has proved that the name of Galilæans was a very ancient, and perhaps the primitive, appellation of the Christians.

⁴² Joseph. *Antiquitat.* xviii. 1, 2. Tillemont, *Ruine des Juifs*, p. 742. The sons of Judas were crucified in the time of Claudius. His grandson Eleazar, after Jerusalem was taken, defended a strong fortress with 960 of his most desperate followers. When the battering-ram had made a breach, they turned their swords against their wives, their children, and at length against their own breasts. They died to the last man.

those of Jesus, known by the more celebrated name of Christians, diffused themselves over the Roman empire. How natural was it for Tacitus, in the time of Hadrian, to appropriate to the Christians the guilt and the sufferings^a which he might, with far greater truth and justice, have attributed to a sect whose odious memory was almost extinguished! 4. Whatever opinion may be entertained of this conjecture (for it is no more than a conjecture), it is evident that the effect, as well as the cause, of Nero's persecution, were confined to the walls of Rome;⁴³ that the religious tenets of the Galilæans, or Christians, were never made a subject of punishment, or even of inquiry; and that, as the idea of their sufferings was, for a long time, connected with the idea of cruelty and injustice, the moderation of succeeding princes inclined them to spare a sect oppressed by a tyrant whose rage had been usually directed against virtue and innocence.

It is somewhat remarkable that the flames of war consumed almost at the same time the Temple of Jerusalem and the Capitol of Rome;⁴⁴ and it appears no less singular that the tribute which devotion had destined to the former should have been converted by the power of an assaulting victor to restore and adorn the splendour of the latter.⁴⁵ The emperors levied a general capitation tax on the Jewish people; and although the sum assessed on the head of each individual was inconsiderable, the use for which it was designed, and the severity with which it was exacted, were

Oppression of
the Jews and
Christians by
Domitian.

⁴³ See Dodwell. *Paucitat. Mart.* l. xiii. The Spanish Inscription in Gruter, p. 238, No. 9, is a manifest and acknowledged forgery, contrived by that noted impostor Cyriacus of Ancona to flatter the pride and prejudices of the Spaniards. See Ferreras, *Histoire d'Espagne*, tom. i. p. 192.

⁴⁴ The Capitol was burnt during the civil war between Vitellius and Vespasian, the 19th of December, A.D. 69. On the 10th of August, A.D. 70, the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the hands of the Jews themselves, rather than by those of the Romans.

⁴⁵ The new Capitol was dedicated by Domitian. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 5. Plutarch in Poplicola [c. 15], tom. i. p. 230, edit. Bryant. The gilding alone cost 12,000 talents (above two millions and a half). It was the opinion of Martial (l. ix. Epigram 4), that, if the emperor had called in his debts, Jupiter himself, even though he had made a general auction of Olympus, would have been unable to pay two shillings in the pound.

^a This conjecture is entirely devoid, not merely of verisimilitude, but even of possibility. Tacitus could not be deceived in appropriating to the Christians of Rome the guilt and the sufferings which he might have attributed with far greater truth to the followers of Judas the Gaulonite; for the latter never went to Rome. Their revolt, their attempts, their opinions, their wars, their punishment, had no other theatre but Judæa. (Basnage, *Hist. des*

Juifs, t. i. p. 491.) Moreover, the name of Christians had long been given in Rome to the disciples of Jesus; and Tacitus affirms too positively, refers too distinctly to its etymology, to allow us to suspect any mistake on his part.—G.

M. Guizot's expressions are not in the least too strong against this strange imagination of Gibbon; it may be doubted whether the followers of Judas were known as a sect under the name of Galileans.—M.

considered as an intolerable grievance.⁴⁶ Since the officers of the revenue extended their unjust claim to many persons who were strangers to the blood or religion of the Jews, it was impossible that the Christians, who had so often sheltered themselves under the shade of the synagogue, should now escape this rapacious persecution. Anxious as they were to avoid the slightest infection of idolatry, their conscience forbade them to contribute to the honour of that dæmon who had assumed the character of the Capitoline Jupiter. As a very numerous though declining party among the Christians still adhered to the law of Moses, their efforts to dissemble their Jewish origin were detected by the decisive test of circumcision,⁴⁷ nor were the Roman magistrates at leisure to inquire into the difference of their religious tenets. Among the Christians who were brought before the tribunal of the emperor, or, as it seems more probable, before that of the procurator of Judæa, two persons are said to have appeared, distinguished by their extraction, which was more truly noble than that of the greatest monarchs. These were the grandsons of St. Jude the apostle, who himself was the brother of Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ Their natural pretensions to the throne of David might perhaps attract the respect of the people, and excite the jealousy of the governor; but the meanness of their garb and the simplicity of their answers soon convinced him that they were neither desirous nor capable of disturbing the peace of the Roman empire. They frankly confessed their royal origin, and their near relation to the Messiah; but they disclaimed any temporal views, and professed that his kingdom, which they devoutly expected, was purely of a spiritual and angelic nature. When they were examined concerning their fortune and occupation, they showed their hands hardened with daily labour, and declared that they derived their whole subsistence from the cultivation of a farm near the village of Cocaba, of the extent of about twenty-four English acres,⁴⁹ and of the value of nine

⁴⁶ With regard to the tribute, see Dion Cassius, l. lxxvi. [c. 7] p. 1082, with Reimarus's notes; Spanheim, de Usu Numismatum, tom. ii. p. 571; and Basnago, Histoire des Juifs, l. vii. c. 2.

⁴⁷ Suetonius (in Domitian. c. 12) had seen an old man of ninety publicly examined before the procurator's tribunal. This is what Martial calls *Mentula tributis damnata*.

⁴⁸ This appellation was at first understood in the most obvious sense, and it was supposed that the brothers of Jesus were the lawful issue of Joseph and Mary. A devout respect for the virginity of the mother of God suggested to the Gnostics, and afterwards to the orthodox Greeks, the expedient of bestowing a second wife on Joseph. The Latins (from the time of Jerome) improved on that hint, asserted the perpetual celibacy of Joseph, and justified by many similar examples the new interpretation that Jude, as well as Simon and James, who are styled the brothers of Jesus Christ, were only his first-cousins. See Tillemont, Mém. Ecclésiast. tom. i. part iii.; and Beausobre, Hist. Critique du Manichéisme, l. ii. c. 2.

⁴⁹ Thirty-nine *τάλα*, squares of an hundred feet each, which, if strictly computed, would scarcely amount to nine acres. But the probability of circumstances, the

thousand drachms, or three hundred pounds sterling. The grandsons of St. Jude were dismissed with compassion and contempt.⁵⁰

But although the obscurity of the house of David might protect them from the suspicions of a tyrant, the present greatness of his own family alarmed the pusillanimous temper of Domitian, which could only be appeased by the blood of those Romans whom he either feared, or hated, or esteemed. Of the two sons of his uncle Flavius Sabinus,⁵¹ the elder was soon convicted of treasonable intentions, and the younger, who bore the name of Flavius Clemens, was indebted for his safety to his want of courage and ability.⁵² The emperor for a long time distinguished so harmless a kinsman by his favour and protection, bestowed on him his own niece Domitilla, adopted the children of that marriage to the hope of the succession, and invested their father with the honours of the consulship. But he had scarcely finished the term of his annual magistracy, when on a slight pretence he was condemned and executed; Domitilla was banished to a desolate island on the coast of Campania; ^{Execution of Clemens the consul} and sentences either of death or of confiscation were pronounced against a great number of persons who were involved in the same accusation. The guilt imputed to their charge was that of *Atheism* and *Jewish manners*; ⁵³ a singular association of ideas, which cannot with any propriety be applied except to the Christians, as they were obscurely and imperfectly viewed by the magistrates and by the writers of that period. On the strength of so probable an interpretation, and too eagerly admitting the suspicions of a tyrant as an evidence of their honourable crime, the church has placed both Clemens and Domitilla among its first martyrs, and has branded the cruelty of Domitian with the name of the second persecution. But this persecution (if it deserves that epithet) was of no long duration. A few months after the death of Clemens and the banishment of Domitilla, Stephen, a freedman belonging to the latter, who had

practice of other Greek writers, and the authority of M. de Valois, incline me to believe that the *κρίσις* is used to express the Roman *jugum*.

⁵⁰ Eusebius, iii. 20. The story is taken from Hegesippus.

⁵¹ See the death and character of Sabinus in Tacitus (Hist. iii. 74, 75). Sabinus was the elder brother, and, till the accession of Vespasian, had been considered as the principal support of the Flavian family.

⁵² Flavius Clementem patrualem suum *contemptissima inertia* . . . *ex tenuissima suspicione interemit*. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 15.

⁵³ The isle of Pandataria, according to Dion. Bruttius Præsens (apud Euseb. iii. 18) banishes her to that of Pontia, which was not far distant from the other. That difference, and a mistake, either of Eusebius or of his transcribers, have given occasion to suppose two Domitillas, the wife and the niece of Clemens. See Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. ii. p. 224.

⁵⁴ Dion, l. lxxvii. [c. 14] p. 1112. If the Bruttius Præsens, from whom it is probable that he collected this account, was the correspondent of Pliny (Epistol. vii. 3), we may consider him as a contemporary writer.

enjoyed the favour, but who had not surely embraced the faith, of his mistress,^a assassinated the emperor in his palace.⁵⁵ The memory of Domitian was condemned by the senate; his acts were rescinded; his exiles recalled; and under the gentle administration of Nerva, while the innocent were restored to their rank and fortunes, even the most guilty either obtained pardon or escaped punishment.⁵⁶

II. About ten years afterwards, under the reign of Trajan, the younger Pliny was intrusted by his friend and master with the government of Bithynia and Pontus. He soon found himself at a loss to determine by what rule of justice or of law he should direct his conduct in the execution of an office the most repugnant to his humanity. Pliny had never assisted at any judicial proceedings against the Christians, with whose name alone he seems to be acquainted; and he was totally uninformed with regard to the nature of their guilt, the method of their conviction, and the degree of their punishment. In this perplexity he had recourse to his usual expedient, of submitting to the wisdom of Trajan an impartial, and, in some respects, a favourable account of the new superstition, requesting the emperor that he would condescend to resolve his doubts and to instruct his ignorance.⁵⁷ The life of Pliny had been employed in the acquisition of learning, and in the business of the world. Since the age of nineteen he had pleaded with distinction in the tribunals of Rome,⁵⁸ filled a place in the senate, had been invested with the honours of the consulship, and had formed very numerous connections with every order of men, both in Italy and in the provinces. From *his* ignorance therefore we may derive some useful information. We may assure ourselves that when he accepted the government of Bithynia there were no general laws or decrees of the senate in force against the Christians; that neither Trajan nor any of his virtuous predecessors, whose edicts were received into the civil and criminal jurisprudence, had publicly declared their inten-

⁵⁵ Suet. in Domit. c. 17. Philostratus in Vit. Apollon. l. viii.

⁵⁶ Dion, l. lxxviii. [c. 1] p. 1118. Plin. Epistol. iv. 22.

⁵⁷ Plin. Epistol. x. 97. The learned Mosheim expresses himself (p. 147, 232) with the highest approbation of Pliny's moderate and candid temper. Notwithstanding Dr. Lardner's suspicions (see Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. ii. p. 46), I am unable to discover any bigotry in his language or proceedings.^b

⁵⁸ Plin. Epist. v. 8. He pleaded his first cause A.D. 81; the year after the famous eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, in which his uncle lost his life.

^a This is an uncandid sarcasm. There is nothing to connect Stephen with the religion of Domitilla. He was a knave detected in the malversation of money—*interceptorum pecuniarum reus*.—M.

^b Yet the humane Pliny put two female

attendants, probably deaconesses, to the torture, in order to ascertain the real nature of these suspicious meetings: *necessarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur, quid esset veri et per tormenta querere*.—M.

tions concerning the new sect; and that, whatever proceedings had been carried on against the Christians, there were none of sufficient weight and authority to establish a precedent for the conduct of a Roman magistrate.

The answer of Trajan, to which the Christians of the succeeding age have frequently appealed, discovers as much regard for justice and humanity as could be reconciled with his mistaken notions of religious policy.⁵⁹ Instead of displaying the implacable zeal of an Inquisitor, anxious to discover the most minute particles of heresy, and exulting in the number of his victims, the emperor expresses much more solicitude to protect the security of the innocent than to prevent the escape of the guilty. He acknowledges the difficulty of fixing any general plan; but he lays down two salutary rules, which often afforded relief and support to the distressed Christians. Though he directs the magistrates to punish such persons as are legally convicted, he prohibits them, with a very humane inconsistency, from making any inquiries concerning the supposed criminals. Nor was the magistrate allowed to proceed on every kind of information. Anonymous charges the emperor rejects, as too repugnant to the equity of his government; and he strictly requires, for the conviction of those to whom the guilt of Christianity is imputed, the positive evidence of a fair and open accuser. It is likewise probable that the persons who assumed so invidious an office were obliged to declare the grounds of their suspicions, to specify (both in respect to time and place) the secret assemblies which their Christian adversary had frequented, and to disclose a great number of circumstances which were concealed with the most vigilant jealousy from the eye of the profane. If they succeeded in their prosecution, they were exposed to the resentment of a considerable and active party, to the censure of the more liberal portion of mankind, and to the ignominy which, in every age and country, has attended the character of an informer. If, on the contrary, they failed in their proofs, they incurred the severe and perhaps capital penalty, which, according to a law published by the emperor Hadrian, was inflicted on those who falsely attributed to their fellow-citizens the crime of Christianity. The violence of personal or superstitious animosity might sometimes prevail over the most natural apprehensions of disgrace and danger; but it cannot surely be imagined that accusations of so unpromising an appearance

Trajan and his successors establish a legal mode of proceeding against them.

⁵⁹ Plin. Epist. x. 98. Tertullian (Apolog. c. 5) considers this rescript as a relaxation of the ancient penal laws, "quas Trajanus ex parte frustratus est;" and yet Tertullian, in another part of his Apology, exposes the inconsistency of prohibiting inquiries and enjoining punishments.

were either lightly or frequently undertaken by the Pagan subjects of the Roman empire.^{60 a}

The expedient which was employed to elude the prudence of the laws affords a sufficient proof how effectually they dis-
Popular
clamours.
appointed the mischievous designs of private malice or superstitious zeal. In a large and tumultuous assembly the restraints of fear and shame, so forcible on the minds of individuals, are deprived of the greatest part of their influence. The pious Christian, as he was desirous to obtain, or to escape, the glory of martyrdom, expected, either with impatience or with terror, the stated returns of the public games and festivals. On those occasions the inhabitants of the great cities of the empire were collected in the circus or the theatre, where every circumstance of the place, as well as of the ceremony, contributed to kindle their devotion and to extinguish their humanity. Whilst the numerous spectators, crowned with garlands, perfumed with incense, purified with the blood of victims, and surrounded with the altars and statues of their tutelar deities, resigned themselves to the enjoyment of pleasures which they considered as an essential part of their religious worship, they recollected that the Christians alone abhorred the gods of mankind, and, by their absence and melancholy on these solemn festivals, seemed to insult or to lament the public felicity. If the empire had been afflicted by any recent calamity, by a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war; if the Tiber had, or if the Nile had not, risen beyond its banks; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious Pagans were convinced that the crimes and the impiety of the Christians, who were spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the Divine justice. It was not among a licentious and exasperated populace that the forms of legal proceedings could be observed; it was not in an amphitheatre, stained with the blood of wild beasts and gladiators, that the voice of compassion could be heard. The impatient clamours of the multitude denounced the Christians as the enemies of gods and men, doomed them to the severest tortures, and, venturing to accuse by name some of the most distinguished of the new sectaries, required with irresistible vehemence that they should be instantly apprehended and cast to the

⁶⁰ Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiast. l. iv. c. 9) has preserved the edict of Hadrian. He has likewise (c. 13) given us one still more favourable under the name of Antoninus, the authenticity of which is not so universally allowed. The second Apology of Justin contains some curious particulars relative to the accusations of Christians.

^a The enactment of this law affords among presumption that accusations of the "crime of Christianity" were by no means so uncommon, nor received with

so much mistrust and caution by the ruling authorities, as Gibbon would insinuate.—M.

lions.⁶¹ The provincial governors and magistrates who presided in the public spectacles were usually inclined to gratify the inclinations, and to appease the rage of the people, by the sacrifice of a few obnoxious victims. But the wisdom of the emperors protected the church from the danger of these tumultuous clamours and irregular accusations, which they justly censured as repugnant both to the firmness and to the equity of their administration. The edicts of Hadrian and of Antoninus Pius expressly declared that the voice of the multitude should never be admitted as legal evidence to convict or to punish those unfortunate persons who had embraced the enthusiasm of the Christians.⁶²

III. Punishment was not the inevitable consequence of conviction, and the Christians whose guilt was the most clearly proved by the testimony of witnesses, or even by their voluntary confession, still retained in their own power the alternative of life or death. It was not so much the past offence, as the actual resistance, which excited the indignation of the magistrate. He was persuaded that he offered them an easy pardon, since, if they consented to cast a few grains of incense upon the altar, they were dismissed from the tribunal in safety and with applause. It was esteemed the duty of a humane judge to endeavour to reclaim, rather than to punish, those deluded enthusiasts. Varying his tone according to the age, the sex, or the situation of the prisoners, he frequently condescended to set before their eyes every circumstance which could render life more pleasing, or death more terrible; and to solicit, nay to intreat them, that they would show some compassion to themselves, to their families, and to their friends.⁶³ If threats and persuasions proved ineffectual, he had often recourse to violence; the scourge and the rack were called in to supply the deficiency of argument, and every art of cruelty was employed to subdue such inflexible, and, as it appeared to the Pagans, such criminal obstinacy. The ancient apologists of Christianity have censured, with equal truth and severity, the irregular conduct of their persecutors, who, contrary to every principle of judicial proceeding, admitted the use of torture, in order to obtain, not a confession, but a denial, of the crime which was the object of their

*Trials of the
Christians.*

⁶¹ See Tertullian (*Apolog.* c. 40). The Acts of the Martyrdom of Polycarp exhibit a lively picture of these tumults, which were usually fomented by the malice of the Jews.

⁶² These regulations are inserted in the above-mentioned edicts of Hadrian and Pius. See the Apology of Melito (*apud Euseb.* l. iv. c. 26).

⁶³ See the rescript of Trajan, and the conduct of Pliny. The most authentic Acts of the Martyrs abound in these exhortations.^a

^a Pliny's test was the worship of the emperor, and blaspheming Christ—*præterea gods, offerings to the statue of the em- maledicent Christo.—M.*

inquiry.⁶⁴ The monks of succeeding ages, who, in their peaceful solitudes, entertained themselves with diversifying the deaths and sufferings of the primitive martyrs, have frequently invented torments of a much more refined and ingenious nature. In particular, it has pleased them to suppose that the zeal of the Roman magistrates disdaining every consideration of moral virtue or public decency, endeavoured to seduce those whom they were unable to vanquish, and that by their orders the most brutal violence was offered to those whom they found it impossible to seduce. It is related that pious females, who were prepared to despise death, were sometimes condemned to a more severe trial, and called upon to determine whether they set a higher value on their religion or on their chastity. The youths to whose licentious embraces they were abandoned received a solemn exhortation from the judge to exert their most strenuous efforts to maintain the honour of Venus against the impious virgin who refused to burn incense on her altars. Their violence, however, was commonly disappointed, and the seasonable interposition of some miraculous power preserved the chaste spouses of Christ from the dishonour even of an involuntary defeat. We should not indeed neglect to remark that the more ancient as well as authentic memoirs of the church are seldom polluted with these extravagant and indecent fictions.⁶⁵

The total disregard of truth and probability in the representation of these primitive martyrdoms was occasioned by a very natural mistake. The ecclesiastical writers of the fourth or fifth centuries ascribed to the magistrates of Rome the same degree of implacable and unrelenting zeal which filled their own breasts against the heretics or the idolaters of their own times. It is not improbable that some of those persons who were raised to the dignities of the empire might have imbibed the prejudices of the populace, and that the cruel disposition of others might occasionally be stimulated by motives of avarice or of personal resentment.⁶⁶ But it is certain, and we may appeal to the grateful confessions of the first Christians, that the greatest part of those magistrates who exercised in the provinces the authority of the emperor or of the senate, and to whose hands alone the jurisdiction of life and death was intrusted, behaved

⁶⁴ In particular, see Tertullian (*Apolog.* c. 2, 3) and Lactantius (*Institut. Divin.* v. 9). Their reasonings are almost the same; but we may discover that one of these apologists had been a lawyer, and the other a rhetorician.

⁶⁵ See two instances of this kind of torture in the *Acta Sincera Martyrum*, published by Ruinart, p. 160, 399. Jerome, in his *Legend of Paul the Hermit*, tells a strange story of a young man who was chained naked on a bed of flowers, and assaulted by a beautiful and wanton courtesan. He quelled the rising temptation by biting off his tongue.

⁶⁶ The conversion of his wife provoked Claudius Herminianus, governor of Cappadocia, to treat the Christians with uncommon severity. Tertullian *ad Scapulam*, c. 3.

like men of polished manners and liberal educations, who respected the rules of justice, and who were conversant with the precepts of philosophy. They frequently declined the odious task of persecution, dismissed the charge with contempt, or suggested to the accused Christian some legal evasion by which he might elude the severity of the laws.⁶⁷ Whenever they were invested with a discretionary power,⁶⁸ they used it much less for the oppression than for the relief and benefit of the afflicted church. They were far from condemning all the Christians who were accused before their tribunal, and very far from punishing with death all those who were convicted of an obstinate adherence to the new superstition. Contenting themselves, for the most part, with the milder chastisements of imprisonment, exile, or slavery in the mines,⁶⁹ they left the unhappy victims of their justice some reason to hope that a prosperous event, the accession, the marriage, or the triumph of an emperor, might speedily restore them by a general pardon to their former state. The ^{Inconsiderable number of martyrs.} martyrs, devoted to immediate execution by the Roman magistrates, appear to have been selected from the most opposite extremes. They were either bishops and presbyters, the persons the most distinguished among the Christians by their rank and influence, and whose example might strike terror into the whole sect;⁷⁰ or else they were the meanest and most abject among them, particularly those of the servile condition, whose lives were esteemed of little value, and whose sufferings were viewed by the ancients with too careless an indifference.⁷¹ The learned Origen, who, from his experience as well as reading, was intimately acquainted with the history of the Christians, declares, in the most express terms, that the number of

⁶⁷ Tertullian, in his epistle to the governor of Africa, mentions several remarkable instances of lenity and forbearance which had happened within his knowledge.

⁶⁸ *Neque enim in universum aliquid quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest*: an expression of Trajan, which gave a very great latitude to the governors of provinces.*

⁶⁹ *In metalla damnatur, in insulas relegatur*. Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 12. The mines of Numidia contained nine bishops, with a proportionable number of their clergy and people, to whom Cyprian addressed a pious epistle of praise and comfort. See Cyprian. *Epistol.* 76, 77.

⁷⁰ Though we cannot receive with entire confidence either the epistles or the acts of Ignatius (they may be found in the 2nd volume of the *Apostolic Fathers*), yet we may quote that bishop of Antioch as one of these *exemplary* martyrs. He was sent in chains to Rome as a public spectacle; and when he arrived at Troas he received the pleasing intelligence that the persecution of Antioch was already at an end.

⁷¹ Among the martyrs of Lyons (*Euseb.* l. v. c. 1) the slave Blandina was distinguished by more exquisite tortures. Of the five martyrs so much celebrated in the Acts of Felicitas and Perpetua, two were of a servile, and two others of a very mean, condition.

* Gibbon altogether forgets that Trajan fully approved of the course pursued by Pliny. That course was, to order all who

persevered in their faith to be led to execution: *perseverantes duci jussi*.—M.

martyrs was very inconsiderable.⁷² His authority would alone be sufficient to annihilate that formidable army of martyrs, whose relics, drawn for the most part from the catacombs of Rome, have replenished so many churches,⁷³ and whose marvellous achievements have been the subject of so many volumes of holy romance.⁷⁴ But the general assertion of Origen may be explained and confirmed by the particular testimony of his friend Dionysius, who, in the immense city of Alexandria, and under the rigorous persecution of Decius, reckons only ten men and seven women who suffered for the profession of the Christian name.⁷⁵

During the same period of persecution, the zealous, the eloquent, the ambitious Cyprian governed the church, not only of Carthage, but even of Africa. He possessed every quality which could engage the reverence of the faithful, or provoke the suspicions and resentment of the Pagan magistrates. His character as well as his station seemed to mark out that holy prelate as the most distinguished object of envy and of danger.⁷⁶ The

Example of
Cyprian,
bishop of
Carthage.

⁷² Origen. advers. Celsum, l. iii. p. 116 [c. 8, tom. i. p. 452, ed. Bened.]. His words deserve to be transcribed:—"Ολιγοὶ κατὰ καιρὸν, καὶ σφόδρα ἐναρίθμητοι ὑπὲρ τῆς Χριστιανῶ. Σκορβείας τινὲν καὶ."

⁷³ If we recollect that all the Plebeians of Rome were not Christians, and that all the Christians were not saints and martyrs, we may judge with how much safety religious honours can be ascribed to bones or urns indiscriminately taken from the public burial-place. After ten centuries of a very free and open trade some suspicions have arisen among the more learned Catholics. They now require, as a proof of sanctity and martyrdom, the letters B. M., a vial full of red liquor supposed to be blood, or the figure of a palm-tree. But the two former signs are of little weight, and with regard to the last, it is observed by the critics—1. That the figure, as it is called, of a palm, is perhaps a cypress, and perhaps only a stop, the flourish of a comma used in the monumental inscriptions. 2. That the palm was the symbol of victory among the Pagans. 3. That among the Christians it served as the emblem, not only of martyrdom, but in general of a joyful resurrection. See the epistle of P. Mabillon on the worship of unknown saints, and Muratori sopra le Antichità Italiane, Dissertat. lviii.

⁷⁴ As a specimen of these legends, we may be satisfied with 10,000 Christian soldiers crucified in one day, either by Trajan or Hadrian, on Mount Ararat. See Baronius ad Martyrologium Romanum; Tillemont, Mém. Ecclésiast. tom. ii. part ii. p. 438; and Geddes's Miscellanies, vol. ii. p. 203. The abbreviation of MIL., which may signify either *soldiers* or *thousands*, is said to have occasioned some extraordinary mistakes.

⁷⁵ Dionysius ap. Euseb. l. vi. c. 41. One of the seventeen was likewise accused of robbery.^b

⁷⁶ The letters of Cyprian exhibit a very curious and original picture both of the *man* and of the *times*. See likewise the two Lives of Cyprian, composed with equal accuracy, though with very different views; the one by Le Clerc (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. xii. p. 208-378), the other by Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. iv. part i. p. 76-459.

^a The words that follow should be quoted: "God not permitting that all this class of men should be exterminated;" which appears to indicate that Origen thought the number put to death inconsiderable only when compared to the numbers who had survived. Besides this, he is speaking of the state of the religion

under Caracalla, Elagabalus, Alexander Severus, and Philip, who had not persecuted the Christians. It was during the reign of the latter that Origen wrote his books against Celsus.—G.

^b Gibbon ought to have said, was falsely accused of robbery, for so it is in the Greek text.—G.

experience, however, of the life of Cyprian is sufficient to prove that our fancy has exaggerated the perilous situation of a Christian bishop; and that the dangers to which he was exposed were less imminent than those which temporal ambition is always prepared to encounter in the pursuit of honours. Four Roman emperors, with their families, their favourites, and their adherents, perished by the sword in the space of ten years, during which the bishop of Carthage guided by his authority and eloquence the councils of the African church. It was only in the third year of his administration that he had reason, during a few months, to apprehend the severe edicts of Decius, the vigilance of the magistrate, and the clamours ^{His danger and flight.} of the multitude, who loudly demanded that Cyprian, the leader of the Christians, should be thrown to the lions. Prudence suggested the necessity of a temporary retreat, and the voice of prudence was obeyed. He withdrew himself into an obscure solitude, from whence he could maintain a constant correspondence with the clergy and people of Carthage; and, concealing himself till the tempest was past, he preserved his life, without relinquishing either his power or his reputation. His extreme caution did not however escape the censure of the more rigid Christians, who lamented, or the reproaches of his personal enemies, who insulted, a conduct which they considered as a pusillanimous and criminal desertion of the most sacred duty.⁷⁷ The propriety of reserving himself for the future exigencies of the church, the example of several holy bishops,⁷⁸ and the divine admonitions which, as he declares himself, he frequently received in visions and ecstasies, were the reasons alleged in his justification.⁷⁹ But his best apology may be found in the cheerful resolution with which, about eight years afterwards, he suffered death in the cause of religion. The authentic history of his martyrdom has been recorded with unusual candour and impartiality. A short abstract therefore of its most important circumstances will convey the clearest information of the spirit and of the forms of the Roman persecutions.⁸⁰

When Valerian was consul for the third, and Gallienus for the fourth time, Paternus, proconsul of Africa, summoned Cyprian to appear in his private council-chamber. He there ^{A. D. 257. His banishment.}

⁷⁷ See the polite but severe epistle of the clergy of Rome to the bishop of Carthage (Cyprian. Epist. 8, 9). Pontius labours with the greatest care and diligence to justify his master against the general censure.

⁷⁸ In particular those of Dionysius of Alexandria, and Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neo-Cæsarea. See Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vi. c. 40; and Mémoires de Tillemont, tom. iv. part ii. p. 685.

⁷⁹ See Cyprian. Epist. 16, and his Life by Pontius.

⁸⁰ We have an original Life of Cyprian by the deacon Pontius, the companion of his exile and the spectator of his death; and we likewise possess the ancient proconsular Acts of his martyrdom. These two relations are consistent with each other, and with probability; and what is somewhat remarkable, they are both unsullied by any miraculous circumstances.

acquainted him with the imperial mandate which he had just received,⁸¹ that those who had abandoned the Roman religion should immediately return to the practice of the ceremonies of their ancestors. Cyprian replied without hesitation that he was a Christian and a bishop, devoted to the worship of the true and only Deity, to whom he offered up his daily supplications for the safety and prosperity of the two emperors, his lawful sovereigns. With modest confidence he pleaded the privilege of a citizen in refusing to give any answer to some invidious and indeed illegal questions which the proconsul had proposed. A sentence of banishment was pronounced as the penalty of Cyprian's disobedience; and he was conducted without delay to Curubis, a free and maritime city of Zeugitana, in a pleasant situation, a fertile territory, and at the distance of about forty miles from Carthage.⁸² The exiled bishop enjoyed the conveniences of life and the consciousness of virtue. His reputation was diffused over Africa and Italy; an account of his behaviour was published for the edification of the Christian world;⁸³ and his solitude was frequently interrupted by the letters, the visits, and the congratulations of the faithful. On the arrival of a new proconsul in the province the fortune of Cyprian appeared for some time to wear a still more favourable aspect. He was recalled from banishment, and, though not yet permitted to return to Carthage, his own gardens in the neighbourhood of the capital were assigned for the place of his residence.⁸⁴

At length, exactly one year⁸⁵ after Cyprian was first apprehended, His condemnation. Galerius Maximus, proconsul of Africa, received the imperial warrant for the execution of the Christian teachers. The bishop of Carthage was sensible that he should be singled out for one of the first victims, and the frailty of nature tempted him to withdraw himself, by a secret flight, from the danger and the honour

⁸¹ It should seem that these were circular orders, sent at the same time to all the governors. Dionysius (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 11) relates the history of his own banishment from Alexandria almost in the same manner. But as he escaped and survived the persecution, we must account him either more or less fortunate than Cyprian.

⁸² See Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 3; Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. part iii. p. 96; Shaw's Travels, p. 90; and for the adjacent country (which is terminated by Cape Bona, or the promontory of Mercury) l'Afrique de Marmol. tom. ii. p. 494. There are the remains of an aqueduct near Curubis, or Curbis, at present altered into Gurbes; and Dr. Shaw read an inscription which styles that city *Colonia Fulvia*. The deacon Pontius (in Vit. Cyprian. c. 12) calls it "Apricum et competentem locum, hospitium pro voluntate secretum, et quicquid apponi eis ante promissum est, qui regnum et justitiam Dei querunt."

⁸³ See Cyprian. Epistol. 77, edit. Fell.

⁸⁴ Upon his conversion he had sold those gardens for the benefit of the poor. The indulgence of God (most probably the liberality of some Christian friend) restored them to Cyprian. See Pontius, c. 15.

⁸⁵ When Cyprian, a twelvemonth before, was sent into exile, he dreamt that he should be put to death the next day. The event made it necessary to explain that word as signifying a year. Pontius, c. 12.

of martyrdom;^a but, soon recovering that fortitude which his character required, he returned to his gardens, and patiently expected the ministers of death. Two officers of rank, who were intrusted with that commission, placed Cyprian between them in a chariot, and, as the proconsul was not then at leisure, they conducted him, not to a prison, but to a private house in Carthage, which belonged to one of them. An elegant supper was provided for the entertainment of the bishop, and his Christian friends were permitted for the last time to enjoy his society, whilst the streets were filled with a multitude of the faithful, anxious and alarmed at the approaching fate of their spiritual father.⁸⁶ In the morning he appeared before the tribunal of the proconsul, who, after informing himself of the name and situation of Cyprian, commanded him to offer sacrifice, and pressed him to reflect on the consequences of his disobedience. The refusal of Cyprian was firm and decisive, and the magistrate, when he had taken the opinion of his council, pronounced, with some reluctance, the sentence of death. It was conceived in the following terms: "That Thascius Cyprianus should be immediately beheaded, as the enemy of the gods of Rome, and as the chief and ringleader of a criminal association, which he had seduced into an impious resistance against the laws of the most holy emperors Valerian and Gallienus."⁸⁷ The manner of his execution was the mildest and least painful that could be inflicted on a person convicted of any capital offence: nor was the use of torture admitted to obtain from the bishop of Carthage either the recantation of his principles or the discovery of his accomplices.

As soon as the sentence was proclaimed, a general cry of "We will die with him" arose at once among the listening multitude of Christians who waited before the palace gates. His martyrdom.

⁸⁶ Pontius (c. 15) acknowledges that Cyprian, with whom he supped, passed the night *custodiâ delicatâ*. The bishop exercised a last and very proper act of jurisdiction, by directing that the younger females, who watched in the street, should be removed from the dangers and temptations of a nocturnal crowd. *Act. Proconsularia*, c. 2.

⁸⁷ See the original sentence in the Acts, c. 4; and in Pontius, c. 17. The latter expresses it in a more rhetorical manner.

^a This was not, as it appears, the motive which induced St. Cyprian to conceal himself for a short time: he was threatened to be carried to Utica; he preferred remaining at Carthage, in order to suffer martyrdom in the midst of his flock, and in order that his death might conduce to the edification of those whom he had guided during life. Such, at least, is his own explanation of his conduct in one of his letters:—Cum perlatum ad nos fuisset,

fratres carissimi, frumentarios esse missos qui me Uticam perducerent, et consilio carissimorum persuasum esset, ut de hortis nostris interim secederemus, justâ interveniente causâ, consensi; eo quod congruat episcopum in eâ civitate, in quâ Ecclesiâ dominicâ præest, illic Dominum confiteri et plebem universam præpositi præsentis confessione clarificari. *Ep. 63* [81 ed. Ox.].—G.

The generous effusions of their zeal and affection were neither serviceable to Cyprian nor dangerous to themselves. He was led away under a guard of tribunes and centurions, without resistance and without insult, to the place of his execution, a spacious and level plain near the city, which was already filled with great numbers of spectators. His faithful presbyters and deacons were permitted to accompany their holy bishop.^a They assisted him in laying aside his upper garment, spread linen on the ground to catch the precious relics of his blood, and received his orders to bestow five-and-twenty pieces of gold on the executioner. The martyr then covered his face with his hands, and at one blow his head was separated from his body. His corpse remained during some hours exposed to the curiosity of the Gentiles, but in the night it was removed, and transported, in a triumphal procession and with a splendid illumination, to the burial-place of the Christians. The funeral of Cyprian was publicly celebrated without receiving any interruption from the Roman magistrates; and those among the faithful who had performed the last offices to his person and his memory were secure from the danger of inquiry or of punishment. It is remarkable that, of so great a multitude of bishops in the province of Africa, Cyprian was the first who was esteemed worthy to obtain the crown of martyrdom.⁸⁸

It was in the choice of Cyprian either to die a martyr or to live an apostate, but on that choice depended the alternative of honour or infamy. Could we suppose that the bishop of Carthage had employed the profession of the Christian faith only as the instrument of his avarice or ambition, it was still incumbent on him to support the character which he had assumed,⁸⁹ and, if he possessed

⁸⁸ Pontius, c. 19. M. de Tillemont (*Mémoires*, tom. iv. part i. p. 450, note 50) is not pleased with so positive an exclusion of any former martyrs of the episcopal rank.^b

⁸⁹ Whatever opinion we may entertain of the character or principles of Thomas Becket, we must acknowledge that he suffered death with a constancy not unworthy of the primitive martyrs. See Lord Lyttelton's *History of Henry II.*, vol. ii. p. 592, &c.

^a There is nothing in the *Life of St. Cyprian*, by Pontius, nor in the ancient manuscripts, which can make us suppose that the presbyters and deacons, in their clerical character, and known to be such, had the permission to attend their holy bishop. Setting aside all religious considerations, it is impossible not to be surprised at the kind of complaisance with which the historian here insists, in favour of the persecutors, on some mitigating circumstances allowed at the death of a man whose only crime was maintaining his own opinions with frankness and courage.—G.

^b M. de Tillemont, as an honest writer, explains the difficulties which he felt about the text of Pontius, and concludes by distinctly stating that without doubt there is some mistake, and that Pontius must have meant only Africa Minor or Carthage; for St. Cyprian, in his 58th (69th) letter addressed to Pupianus, speaks expressly of many bishops his colleagues, *qui proscripti sunt, vel apprehensi in carcere et catenis fuerunt; aut qui in exilium relegati, illustri itinere ad Dominum profecti sunt; aut qui quibusdam locis animadversi, cœlestes coronæ de Domini clarificatione sumpserunt.*—G

the smallest degree of manly fortitude, rather to expose himself to the most cruel tortures than by a single act to exchange the reputation of a whole life for the abhorrence of his Christian brethren and the contempt of the Gentile world. But if the zeal of Cyprian was supported by the sincere conviction of the truth of those doctrines which he preached, the crown of martyrdom must have appeared to him as an object of desire rather than of terror. It is not easy to extract any distinct ideas from the vague though eloquent declamations of the Fathers, or to ascertain the degree of immortal glory and happiness which they confidently promised to those who were so fortunate as to shed their blood in the cause of religion.⁹⁰ They inculcated with becoming diligence that the fire of martyrdom supplied every defect and expiated every sin; that, while the souls of ordinary Christians were obliged to pass through a slow and painful purification, the triumphant sufferers entered into the immediate fruition of eternal bliss, where, in the society of the patriarchs, the apostles, and the prophets, they reigned with Christ, and acted as his assessors in the universal judgment of mankind. The assurance of a lasting reputation upon earth, a motive so congenial to the vanity of human nature, often served to animate the courage of the martyrs. The honours which Rome or Athens bestowed on those citizens who had fallen in the cause of their country were cold and unmeaning demonstrations of respect, when compared with the ardent gratitude and devotion which the primitive church expressed towards the victorious champions of the faith. The annual commemoration of their virtues and sufferings was observed as a sacred ceremony, and at length terminated in religious worship. Among the Christians who had publicly confessed their religious principles, those who (as it very frequently happened) had been dismissed from the tribunal or the prisons of the Pagan magistrates obtained such honours as were justly due to their imperfect martyrdom and their generous resolution. The most pious females courted the permission of imprinting kisses on the fetters which they had worn, and on the wounds which they had received. Their persons were esteemed holy, their decisions were admitted with deference, and they too often abused, by their spiritual pride and licentious manners, the pre-eminence which their zeal and intrepidity had acquired.⁹¹ Distinctions like these, whilst they display the exalted merit, betray the

⁹⁰ See in particular the treatise of Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 87-98, edit. Fell [p. 121.] The learning of Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprianic. xii. xiii.), and the ingenuity of Middleton (Free Inquiry, p. 162, &c.), have left scarcely anything to add concerning the merit, the honours, and the motives of the martyrs.

⁹¹ Cyprian. Epistol. 5, 6, 7, 22, 24; and de Unitat. Ecclesię. The number of pretended martyrs has been very much multiplied by the custom which was introduced of bestowing that honourable name on confessors.

inconsiderable number, of those who suffered and of those who died for the profession of Christianity.

The sober discretion of the present age will more readily censure than admire, but can more easily admire than imitate, the fervour of the first Christians, who, according to the lively expression of Sulpicius Severus, desired martyrdom with more eagerness than his own contemporaries solicited a bishopric.⁹² The epistles which Ignatius composed as he was carried in chains through the cities of Asia breathe sentiments the most repugnant to the ordinary feelings of human nature. He earnestly beseeches the Romans that, when he should be exposed in the amphitheatre, they would not, by their kind but unseasonable intercession, deprive him of the crown of glory; and he declares his resolution to provoke and irritate the wild beasts which might be employed as the instruments of his death.⁹³ Some stories are related of the courage of martyrs who actually performed what Ignatius had intended, who exasperated the fury of the lions, pressed the executioner to hasten his office, cheerfully leaped into the fires which were kindled to consume them, and discovered a sensation of joy and pleasure in the midst of the most exquisite tortures. Several examples have been preserved of a zeal impatient of those restraints which the emperors had provided for the security of the church. The Christians sometimes supplied by their voluntary declaration the want of an accuser, rudely disturbed the public service of paganism,⁹⁴ and, rushing in crowds round the tribunal of the magistrates, called upon them to pronounce and to indict the sentence of the law. The behaviour of the Christians was too remarkable to escape the notice of the ancient philosophers, but they seem to have considered it with much less admiration than astonishment. Incapable of conceiving the motives which sometimes transported the fortitude of believers beyond the bounds of prudence or reason, they treated such an eagerness to die as the strange result of obstinate despair, of stupid insensibility, or of superstitious frenzy.⁹⁵ "Unhappy men!" exclaimed the proconsul Antoninus to the Christians of Asia, "unhappy men! if you are thus weary of

⁹² Certatim gloriosa in certamina ruebatur; multoque avidius tum martyria gloriosis mortibus quærebantur, quam nunc Episcopatus pravis ambitionibus appetuntur. Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. [p. 385, ed. Lugd. Bat. 1647.] He might have omitted the word *nunc*.

⁹³ See Epist. ad Roman. c. 4, 5, ap. Patres Apostol. tom. ii. p. 27. It suited the purpose of Bishop Pearson (see *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, part ii. c. 9) to justify, by a profusion of examples and authorities, the sentiments of Ignatius.

⁹⁴ The story of Polyuctes, on which Corneille has founded a very beautiful tragedy, is one of the most celebrated, though not perhaps the most authentic, instances of this excessive zeal. We should observe that the 60th canon of the council of Illiberis refuses the title of martyrs to those who exposed themselves to death by publicly destroying the idols.

⁹⁵ See Epictetus, l. iv. c. 7 (though there is some doubt whether he alludes to the Christians); Marcus Antoninus de Rebus suis, l. xi. c. 3. Lucian in *Peregrin*.

“your lives, is it so difficult for you to find ropes and precipices?”⁹⁶ He was extremely cautious (as it is observed by a learned and pious historian) of punishing men who had found no accusers but themselves, the imperial laws not having made any provision for so unexpected a case; condemning therefore a few as a warning to their brethren, he dismissed the multitude with indignation and contempt.⁹⁷ Notwithstanding this real or affected disdain, the intrepid constancy of the faithful was productive of more salutary effects on those minds which nature or grace had disposed for the easy reception of religious truth. On these melancholy occasions there were many among the Gentiles who pitied, who admired, and who were converted. The generous enthusiasm was communicated from the sufferer to the spectators, and the blood of martyrs, according to a well-known observation, became the seed of the church.

But although devotion had raised, and eloquence continued to inflame, this fever of the mind, it insensibly gave way to the more natural hopes and fears of the human heart, to the love of life, the apprehension of pain, and the horror of dissolution. The more prudent rulers of the church found themselves obliged to restrain the indiscreet ardour of their followers, and to distrust a constancy which too often abandoned them in the hour of trial.⁹⁸ As the lives of the faithful became less mortified and austere, they were every day less ambitious of the honours of martyrdom; and the soldiers of Christ, instead of distinguishing themselves by voluntary deeds of heroism, frequently deserted their post, and fled in confusion before the enemy whom it was their duty to resist. There were three methods, however, of escaping the flames of persecution, which were not attended with an equal degree of guilt: the first indeed was generally allowed to be innocent; the second was of a doubtful, or at least of a venial, nature; but the third implied a direct and criminal apostasy from the Christian faith.

I. A modern Inquisitor would hear with surprise, that, whenever an information was given to a Roman magistrate of any person within his jurisdiction who had embraced the sect of the Christians, the charge was communicated to the party accused, and that a convenient time was allowed him to settle his domestic concerns, and to prepare an answer to the crime which was imputed to him.⁹⁹ If he entertained any doubt of his own constancy,

Gradual
relaxation.

Three
methods of
escaping
martyrdom.

⁹⁶ Tertullian ad Scapul. c. 5. The learned are divided between three persons of the same name, who were all proconsuls of Asia. I am inclined to ascribe this story to Antoninus Pius, who was afterwards emperor; and who may have governed Asia under the reign of Trajan.

⁹⁷ Mosheim, de Rebus Christ. ante Constantin. p. 235.

⁹⁸ See the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna, ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. iv. c. 15.

⁹⁹ In the second Apology of Justin there is a particular and very curious instance of this legal delay. The same indulgence was granted to accused Christians in the

such a delay afforded him the opportunity of preserving his life and honour by flight, of withdrawing himself into some obscure retirement or some distant province, and of patiently expecting the return of peace and security. A measure so consonant to reason was soon authorised by the advice and example of the most holy prelates; and seems to have been censured by few, except by the Montanists, who deviated into heresy by their strict and obstinate adherence to the rigour of ancient discipline.¹⁰⁰ II. The provincial governors, whose zeal was less prevalent than their avarice, had countenanced the practice of selling certificates (or libels as they were called), which attested that the persons therein mentioned had complied with the laws, and sacrificed to the Roman deities. By producing these false declarations, the opulent and timid Christians were enabled to silence the malice of an informer, and to reconcile in some measure their safety with their religion. A slight penance atoned for this profane dissimulation.¹⁰¹ III. In every persecution there were great numbers of unworthy Christians who publicly disowned or renounced the faith which they had professed; and who confirmed the sincerity of their abjuration by the legal acts of burning incense or of offering sacrifices. Some of these apostates had yielded on the first menace or exhortation of the magistrate; whilst the patience of others had been subdued by the length and repetition of tortures. The affrighted countenances of some betrayed their inward remorse, while others advanced with confidence and alacrity to the altars of the gods.¹⁰² But the disguise which fear had imposed subsisted no longer than the present danger. As soon as the severity of the persecution was abated, the doors of the churches were assailed by the returning multitude of penitents, who detested their idolatrous submission, and who solicited with equal ardour, but with various success, their readmission into the society of Christians.¹⁰³

persecution of Decius: and Cyprian (de Lapsis) expressly mentions the "*Dies negantibus præstitutus*."

¹⁰⁰ Tertullian considers flight from persecution as an imperfect, but very criminal, apostasy, as an impious attempt to elude the will of God, &c. &c. He has written a treatise on this subject (see p. 536-544, edit. Rigalt.), which is filled with the wildest fanaticism and the most incoherent declamation. It is, however, somewhat remarkable that Tertullian did not suffer martyrdom himself.

¹⁰¹ The *Libellatici*, who are chiefly known by the writings of Cyprian, are described with the utmost precision in the copious commentary of Mosheim, p. 483-489.

¹⁰² Plin. Epistol. x. 97. Dionysius Alexandrin. ap. Euseb. l. vi. c. 41. Ad prima statim verba minantis inimici maximus fratrum numerus fidem suam prodidit: nec prostratus est persecutionis impetu, sed voluntario lapsu seipsum prostravit. Cyprian. Opera, p. 89. Among these deserters were many priests and even bishops.

¹⁰³ It was on this occasion that Cyprian wrote his treatise De Lapsis, and many of

* The penance was not so slight, for it was exactly the same with that of apostates who had sacrificed to idols: it lasted several years. See Fleury, Hist. Ecc. v. ii. p. 171.—G.

^b Pliny says that the greater part of the Christians persisted in avowing themselves to be so; the reason for his consulting Trajan was the periclitantium numerus. Eusebius (l. vi. c. 41) does not

IV. Notwithstanding the general rules established for the conviction and punishment of the Christians, the fate of those sectaries, in an extensive and arbitrary government, must still, in a great measure, have depended on their own behaviour, the circumstances of the times, and the temper of their supreme as well as subordinate rulers. Zeal might sometimes provoke, and prudence might sometimes avert or assuage, the superstitious fury of the Pagans. A variety of motives might dispose the provincial governors either to enforce or to relax the execution of the laws; and of these motives the most forcible was their regard not only for the public edicts, but for the secret intentions of the emperor, a glance from whose eye was sufficient to kindle or to extinguish the flames of persecution. As often as any occasional severities were exercised in the different parts of the empire, the primitive Christians lamented and perhaps magnified their own sufferings; but the celebrated number of *ten* persecutions has been determined by the ecclesiastical writers of the fifth century, who possessed a more distinct view of the prosperous or adverse fortunes of the church from the age of Nero to that of Diocletian. The ingenious parallels of the *ten* plagues of Egypt, and of the *ten* horns of the Apocalypse, first suggested this calculation to their minds; and in their application of the faith of prophecy to the truth of history they were careful to select those reigns which were indeed the most hostile to the Christian cause.¹⁰⁴ But these transient persecutions served only to revive the zeal and to restore the discipline of the faithful; and the moments of extraordinary rigour were compensated by much longer intervals of peace and security. The indifference of some princes and the indulgence of others permitted the Christians to enjoy, though not perhaps a legal, yet an actual and public toleration of their religion.

Alternatives of severity and toleration.

The ten persecutions.

The Apology of Tertullian contains two very ancient, very singular, but at the same time very suspicious instances of Imperial clemency; the edicts published by Tiberius and by Marcus Antoninus, and

his epistles. The controversy concerning the treatment of penitent apostates does not occur among the Christians of the preceding century. Shall we ascribe this to the superiority of their faith and courage, or to our less intimate knowledge of their history?

¹⁰⁴ See Mosheim, p. 97. Sulpicius Severus was the first author of this computation; though he seemed desirous of reserving the tenth and greatest persecution for the coming of the Antichrist.

permit us to doubt that the number of those who renounced their faith was infinitely below the number of those who boldly confessed it. The prefect, he says, and his assessors present at the council, were alarmed at seeing the crowd of Christians; the judges themselves trem-

bled. Lastly, St. Cyprian informs us that the greater part of those who had appeared weak brethren in the persecution of Decius, signalised their courage in that of Gallus. *Steterunt fortes, et ipso dolore penitentiarum facti ad prælium fortiores.* Epist. lx. p. 142.—G.

designed not only to protect the innocence of the Christians, but even to proclaim those stupendous miracles which had attested the truth of their doctrine. The first of these examples is attended with some difficulties which might perplex a sceptical mind.¹⁰⁵ We are required to believe *that* Pontius Pilate informed the emperor of the unjust sentence of death which he had pronounced against an innocent, and, as it appeared, a divine person; *an* ¹ that, without acquiring the merit, he exposed himself to the danger, of martyrdom; *that* Tiberius, who avowed his contempt for all religion, immediately conceived the design of placing the Jewish Messiah among the gods of Rome; *that* his servile senate ventured to disobey the commands of their master; *that* Tiberius, instead of resenting their refusal, contented himself with protecting the Christians from the severity of the laws, many years before such laws were enacted or before the church had assumed any distinct name or existence; and lastly, *that* the memory of this extraordinary transaction was preserved in the most public and authentic records, which escaped the knowledge of the historians of Greece and Rome, and were only visible to the eyes of an African Christian, who composed his Apology one hundred and sixty years after the death of Tiberius. The edict of Marcus Antoninus is supposed to have been the effect of his devotion and gratitude for the miraculous deliverance which he had obtained in the Marcomannic war. The distress of the legions, the seasonable tempest of rain and hail, of thunder and of lightning, and the dismay and defeat of the barbarians, have been celebrated by the eloquence of several Pagan writers. If there were any Christians in that army, it was natural that they should ascribe some merit to the fervent prayers which, in the moment of danger, they had offered up for their own and the public safety. But we are still assured by monuments of brass and marble, by the Imperial medals, and by the Antonine column, that neither the prince nor the people entertained any sense of this signal obligation, since they unanimously attribute their deliverance to the providence of Jupiter, and to the interposition of Mercury. During the whole course of his reign Marcus despised the Christians as a philosopher, and punished them as a sovereign.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ The testimony given by Pontius Pilate is first mentioned by Justin. The successive improvements which the story acquired (as it has passed through the hands of Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Orosius, Gregory of Tours, and the authors of the several editions of the Acts of Pilate), are very fairly stated by Dom Calmet, Dissertat. sur l'Ecriture, tom. iii. p. 651, &c.

¹⁰⁶ On this miracle, as it is commonly called, of the Thundering Legion, see the admirable criticism of Mr. Moyle, in his Works, vol. ii. p. 81-390.

^a Gibbon, with this phrase, and that below, which admits the injustice of Marcus, has dexterously glossed over one of the most remarkable facts in the early Christian history, that the reign of the wisest and most humane of the heathen

By a singular fatality, the hardships which they had endured under the government of a virtuous prince immediately ceased on the accession of a tyrant; and as none except themselves had experienced the injustice of Marcus, so they alone were protected by the lenity of Commodus. The celebrated Marcia, the most favoured of his concubines, and who at length contrived the murder of her Imperial lover, entertained a singular affection for the oppressed church; and though it was impossible that she could reconcile the practice of vice with the precepts of the Gospel, she might hope to atone for the frailties of her sex and profession by declaring herself the patroness of the Christians.¹⁰⁷ ^{State of the Christians in the reigns of Commodus and Severus. A.D. 180.} Under the gracious protection of Marcia they passed in safety the thirteen years of a cruel tyranny; and when the empire was established in the house of Severus, they formed a domestic but more honourable connection with the new court. The emperor was persuaded that, in a dangerous sickness, he had derived some benefit, either spiritual or physical, from the holy oil with which one of his slaves had anointed him. He always treated with peculiar distinction several persons of both sexes who had embraced the new religion. The nurse as well as the preceptor of Caracalla were Christians;^b and if that young prince ever betrayed a sentiment of humanity, it was occasioned by an incident which, however trifling, bore some relation

¹⁰⁷ Dion Cassius, or rather his abbreviator Xiphilin, l. lxxii. [c. 4] p. 1206. Mr. Moyle (p. 266) has explained the condition of the church under the reign of Commodus.

emperors was the most fatal to the Christians. Most writers have ascribed the persecutions under Marcus to the latent bigotry of his character; Mosheim to the influence of the philosophic party: but the fact is admitted by all. A late writer (Mr. Waddington, Hist. of the Church, p. 47) has not scrupled to assert that "this prince polluted every year of a long reign with innocent blood;" but the causes, as well as the date, of the persecutions authorized or permitted by Marcus, are equally uncertain.

Of the Asiatic edict recorded by Melito the date is unknown, nor is it quite clear that it was an Imperial edict. If it was the act under which Polycarp suffered, his martyrdom is placed by Ruinart in the sixth, by Mosheim in the ninth, year of the reign of Marcus. The martyrs of Vienne and Lyons are assigned by Dodwell to the seventh, by most writers to the seventeenth. In fact, the commencement of the persecutions of the Christians appears to synchronise exactly with the period of the breaking out of the Marcomannic war, which seems to have alarmed

the whole empire and the emperor himself into a paroxysm of returning piety to their gods, of which the Christians were the victims. See Jul. Capit. Script. Hist. Aug. p. 181, edit. 1661. [M. Anton. Phil. c. 13.] It is remarkable that Tertullian (Apologet. c. 5) distinctly asserts that Verus (M. Aurelius) issued no edicts against the Christians, and almost positively exempts him from the charge of persecution.—M.

This remarkable synchronism, which explains the persecutions under M. Aurelius, is shown at length in Milman's History of Christianity, book ii. c. 7.—M. 1845.

^a The statement of Dion Cassius only makes Marcia the patroness of the Christians; but we now learn, from the recently discovered work of Hippolytus, who calls her *φιλάνθρωπος*, that she had been converted to the Christian faith. See Bunsen, Hippolytus and his Age, vol. i. p. 127.—S.

^b The Jews and Christians contest the honour of having furnished a nurse to the fratricide son of Severus, Caracalla. Hist. of Jews, iii. 158.—M.

to the cause of Christianity.¹⁰⁸ Under the reign of Severus the fury of the populace was checked; the rigour of ancient laws was for some time suspended; and the provincial governors were satisfied with receiving an annual present from the churches within their jurisdiction, as the price, or as the reward, of their moderation.¹⁰⁹ The controversy concerning the precise time of the celebration of Easter armed the bishops of Asia and Italy against each other, and was considered as the most important business of this period of leisure

and tranquillity.¹¹⁰ Nor was the peace of the church interrupted till the increasing numbers of proselytes seem at length to have attracted the attention, and to have alienated the mind, of Severus. With the design of restraining the progress of Christianity, he published an edict, which, though it was designed to affect only the new converts, could not be carried into strict execution without exposing to danger and punishment the most zealous of their teachers and missionaries. In this mitigated persecution we may still discover the indulgent spirit of Rome and of Polytheism, which so readily admitted every excuse in favour of those who practised the religious ceremonies of their fathers.¹¹¹

But the laws which Severus had enacted soon expired with the authority of that emperor; and the Christians, after this accidental tempest, enjoyed a calm of thirty-eight years.¹¹² Till this period they had usually held their assemblies in private houses and sequestered places. They were now permitted to erect and consecrate convenient edifices for the purpose of religious worship;¹¹³ to purchase lands, even at Rome itself, for the use of the community; and to conduct the elections of their ecclesiastical ministers in so public, but at the same time in so exemplary a manner, as to deserve the respectful attention of the Gentiles.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Compare the Life of Caracalla, in the Augustan History, with the epistle of Tertullian to Scapula. Dr. Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 5, &c.) considers the cure of Severus, by the means of holy oil, with a strong desire to convert it into a miracle.

¹⁰⁹ Tertullian de Fugâ, c. 13. The present was made during the feast of the Saturnalia; and it is a matter of serious concern to Tertullian that the faithful should be confounded with the most infamous professions which purchased the connivance of the government.

¹¹⁰ Euseb. l. v. c. 23, 24. Mosheim, p. 435-447.

¹¹¹ Judæos fieri sub gravi poenâ vetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit. Hist. August. p. 70. [Spart. Sever. c. 17.]

¹¹² Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. p. 384 [ed. Lugd. Bat. 1647]. This computation (allowing for a single exception) is confirmed by the History of Eusebius and by the writings of Cyprian.

¹¹³ The antiquity of Christian churches is discussed by Tillemont (Mémoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. iii. part ii. p. 68-72) and by Mr. Moyle (vol. i. p. 378-398). The former refers the first construction of them to the peace of Alexander Severus; the latter, to the peace of Gallienus.

¹¹⁴ See the Augustan History, p. 130. [Lamprid. Alex. Sever. c. 45.] The emperor Alexander adopted their method of publicly proposing the names of those persons who were candidates for ordination. It is true that the honour of this practice is likewise attributed to the Jews

This long repose of the church was accompanied with dignity. The reigns of those princes who derived their extraction from the Asiatic provinces proved the most favourable to the Christians; the eminent persons of the sect, instead of being reduced to implore the protection of a slave or concubine, were admitted into the palace in the honourable characters of priests and philosophers; and their mysterious doctrines, which were already diffused among the people, insensibly attracted the curiosity of their sovereign. When the empress Mamæa passed through Antioch, she expressed a desire of conversing with the celebrated Origen, the fame of whose piety and learning was spread over the East. Origen obeyed so flattering an invitation, and, though he could not expect to succeed in the conversion of an artful and ambitious woman, she listened with pleasure to his eloquent exhortations, and honourably dismissed him to his retirement in Palestine.¹¹⁵ The sentiments of Mamæa were adopted by her son Alexander, and the philosophic devotion of that emperor was marked by a singular but injudicious regard for the Christian religion. In his domestic chapel he placed the statues of Abraham, of Orpheus, of Apollonius, and of Christ, as an honour justly due to those respectable sages who had instructed mankind in the various modes of addressing their homage to the supreme and universal Deity.¹¹⁶ A purer faith, as well as worship, was openly professed and practised among his household. Bishops, perhaps for the first time, were seen at court; and, after the death of Alexander, when the inhuman Maximin discharged his fury on the favourites and servants of his unfortunate benefactor, a great number of Christians, of every rank, and of both sexes, were involved in the promiscuous massacre, which, on their account, has improperly received the name of Persecution.^{117 a}

A.D. 235.

¹¹⁵ Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vi. c. 21. Hieronym. de Script. Eccles. c. 54 [vol. ii. p. 879, ed. Vallars.]. Mamæa was styled a holy and pious woman, both by the Christians and the Pagans. From the former, therefore, it was impossible that she should deserve that honourable epithet.

¹¹⁶ See the Augustan History, p. 123. [Lampr. Alex. Sever. c. 29.] Mosheim (p. 465) seems to refine too much on the domestic religion of Alexander. His design of building a public temple to Christ (Hist. August. p. 129 [Lampr. Alex. Sever. c. 43]), and the objection which was suggested either to him, or in similar circumstances to Hadrian, appear to have no other foundation than an improbable report, invented by the Christians, and credulously adopted by an historian of the age of Constantine.

¹¹⁷ Euseb. l. vi. c. 28. It may be presumed that the success of the Christians had exasperated the increasing bigotry of the Pagans. Dion Cassius, who composed his history under the former reign, had most probably intended for the use of his master those counsels of persecution which he ascribes to a better age, and to the favourite

* It is with good reason that this massacre has been called a persecution, for it lasted during the whole reign of Maximin, as may be seen in Eusebius (l. vi. c. 28).

Rufinus expressly confirms it; *Tribus annis a Maximino persecutione commotâ, in quibus finem et persecutionis fecit et vitæ.* Hist. l. vi. c. 19—G.

Notwithstanding the cruel disposition of Maximin, the effects of his resentment against the Christians were of a very local and temporary nature, and the pious Origen, who had been proscribed as a devoted victim, was still reserved to convey the truths of the Gospel to the ear of monarchs.¹¹⁸ He addressed several edifying letters to the emperor Philip, to his wife, and to his mother; and as soon as that prince, who was born in the neighbourhood of Palestine, had usurped the Imperial sceptre, the Christians acquired a friend and a protector. The public and even partial favour of Philip towards the sectaries of the new religion, and his constant reverence for the ministers of the church, gave some colour to the suspicion, which prevailed in his own times, that the emperor himself was become a convert to the faith;¹¹⁹ and afforded some grounds for a fable which was afterwards invented, that he had been purified by confession and penance from the guilt contracted by the murder of his innocent predecessor.¹²⁰ The fall of Philip introduced, with the change of masters, a new system of government, so oppressive to the Christians, that their former condition, ever since the time of Domitian, was represented as a state of perfect freedom and security, if compared with the rigorous treatment which they experienced under the short reign of Decius.¹²¹

The virtues of that prince will scarcely allow us to suspect that he was actuated by a mean resentment against the favourites of his predecessor; and it is more reasonable to believe that, in the prosecution of his general design to restore the purity of Roman manners, he was desirous of delivering the empire from what he condemned as a recent and criminal superstition. The bishops of the most considerable cities were removed by exile or death: the vigilance of the magistrates prevented the clergy of Rome during sixteen months from proceeding to a new election; and it was the opinion of the Christians

of Augustus. Concerning this oration of Mæcenas, or rather of Dion, I may refer to my own unbiassed opinion (vol. i. c. 1, note 25), and to the Abbé de la Bléterie (*Mémoires de l'Académie*, tom. xxiv. p. 303; tom. xxv. p. 432).

¹¹⁸ Orosius, l. vii. c. 19, mentions Origen as the object of Maximin's resentment; and Firmilianus, a Cappadocian bishop of that age, gives a just and confined idea of this persecution (apud Cyprian, *Epist.* 75).

¹¹⁹ The mention of those princes who were publicly supposed to be Christians, as we find it in an epistle of Dionysius of Alexandria (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 10), evidently alludes to Philip and his family; and forms a contemporary evidence that such a report had prevailed; but the Egyptian bishop, who lived at an humble distance from the court of Rome, expresses himself with a becoming diffidence concerning the truth of the fact. The epistles of Origen (which were extant in the time of Eusebius, see l. vi c. 36) would most probably decide this curious, rather than important, question.

¹²⁰ Euseb. l. vi. c. 34. The story, as is usual, has been embellished by succeeding writers, and is confuted, with much superfluous learning, by Frederick Spanheim (*Opera Varia*, tom. ii. p. 400, &c.).

¹²¹ Lactantius, *de Mortibus Persecutorum*, c. 3, 4. After celebrating the felicity and increase of the church under a long succession of good princes, he adds, "Extitit post annos plurimos, execrabile animal, Decius, qui vexaret Ecclesiam."

that the emperor would more patiently endure a competitor for the purple than a bishop in the capital.¹²² Were it possible to suppose that the penetration of Decius had discovered pride under the disguise of humility, or that he could foresee the temporal dominion which might insensibly arise from the claims of spiritual authority, we might be less surprised that he should consider the successors of St. Peter as the most formidable rivals to those of Augustus.

The administration of Valerian was distinguished by a levity and inconstancy ill suited to the gravity of the *Roman Censor*. In the first part of his reign he surpassed in clemency those princes who had been suspected of an attachment to the Christian faith. In the last three years and a half, listening to the insinuations of a minister addicted to the superstitions of Egypt, he adopted the maxims, and imitated the severity, of his predecessor Decius.¹²³ The accession of Gallienus, which increased the calamities of the empire, restored peace to the church; and the Christians obtained the free exercise of their religion by an edict addressed to the bishops, and conceived in such terms as seemed to acknowledge their office and public character.¹²⁴ The ancient laws, without being formally repealed, were suffered to sink into oblivion; and (excepting only some hostile intentions which are attributed to the emperor Aurelian¹²⁵) the disciples of Christ passed above forty years in a state of prosperity, far more dangerous to their virtue than the severest trials of persecution.

Of Valerian,
Gallienus
and his
successors,
A.D. 253-260.

¹²² Euseb. l. vi. c. 39. Cyprian. Epistol. 55. The see of Rome remained vacant from the martyrdom of Fabianus, the 20th of January, A.D. 250, till the election of Cornelius, the 4th of June, A.D. 251. Decius had probably left Rome, since he was killed before the end of that year.

¹²³ Euseb. l. vii. c. 10. Mosheim (p. 548) has very clearly shown that the præfect Macrianus, and the Egyptian *Magus*, are one and the same person.

¹²⁴ Eusebius (l. vii. c. 13) gives us a Greek version of this Latin edict, which seems to have been very concise. By another edict he directed that the *Cæmeteria* should be restored to the Christians.

¹²⁵ Euseb. l. vii. c. 30. Lactantius de M. P. c. 6. Hieronym. in Chron. p. 177 [Anno ab. Abr. 2290, tom. viii. p. 757, ed. Vallars.]. Orosius, l. vii. c. 23. Their language is in general so ambiguous and incorrect, that we are at a loss to determine how far Aurelian had carried his intentions before he was assassinated. Most of the moderns (except Dodwell, Dissertat. Cyprian. xi. 64) have seized the occasion of gaining a few extraordinary martyrs.^a

^a Dr. Lardner has detailed, with his usual impartiality, all that has come down to us relating to the persecution of Aurelian, and concludes by saying, "Upon more carefully examining the words of Eusebius, and observing the accounts of other authors, learned men have generally, and as I think very judiciously, determined that Aurelian not only intended, but did

actually persecute; but his persecution was short, he having died soon after the publication of his edicts." Heathen Test. c. xxxvi.—Basnage positively pronounces the same opinion: *Non intentatum modo, sed executum quoque brevissimo tempore mandatum, nobis infixum est in animis*. Basn. Ann. 275, No. 2; and compare Pagi Ann. 272, Nos. 4, 12, 273.—G.

The story of Paul of Samosata, who filled the metropolitan see of Antioch while the East was in the hands of Odenathus and Zenobia, may serve to illustrate the condition and character of the times. The wealth of that prelate was a sufficient evidence of his guilt, since it was neither derived from the inheritance of his fathers, nor acquired by the arts of honest industry. But Paul considered the service of the church as a very lucrative profession.¹²⁶ His ecclesiastical jurisdiction was venal and rapacious, he extorted frequent contributions from the most opulent of the faithful, and converted to his own use a considerable part of the public revenue. By his pride and luxury the Christian religion was rendered odious in the eyes of the Gentiles. His council chamber and his throne, the splendour with which he appeared in public, the suppliant crowd who solicited his attention, the multitude of letters and petitions to which he dictated his answers, and the perpetual hurry of business in which he was involved, were circumstances much better suited to the state of a civil magistrate¹²⁷ than to the humility of a primitive bishop. When he harangued his people from the pulpit, Paul affected the figurative style and the theatrical gestures of an Asiatic sophist, while the cathedral resounded with the loudest and most extravagant acclamations in the praise of his divine eloquence. Against those who resisted his power, or refused to flatter his vanity, the prelate of Antioch was arrogant, rigid, and inexorable; but he relaxed the discipline, and lavished the treasures of the church on his dependent clergy, who were permitted to imitate their master in the gratification of every sensual appetite. For Paul indulged himself very freely in the pleasures of the table, and he had received into the episcopal palace two young and beautiful women, as the constant companions of his leisure moments.¹²⁸

Notwithstanding these scandalous vices, if Paul of Samosata had preserved the purity of the orthodox faith, his reign over the capital of Syria would have ended only with his life; and had a seasonable persecution intervened, an effort of

He is degraded from the see of Antioch. A.D. 270.

¹²⁶ Paul was better pleased with the title of *Ducenarius* than with that of bishop. The *Ducenarius* was an imperial procurator, so called from his salary of two hundred *Sestertia*, or 1600*l.* a-year. (See Salmasius ad Hist. August. p. 124.) Some critics suppose that the bishop of Antioch had actually obtained such an office from Zenobia, while others consider it only as a figurative expression of his pomp and insolence.

¹²⁷ Simony was not unknown in those times; and the clergy sometimes bought what they intended to sell. It appears that the bishopric of Carthage was purchased by a wealthy matron, named Lucilla, for her servant Majorinus. The price was 400 *Follis*. (Monument. Antiq. ad calcem Optati, p. 263.) Every *Follis* contained 125 pieces of silver, and the whole sum may be computed at about 2400*l.*

¹²⁸ If we are desirous of extenuating the vices of Paul, we must suspect the assembled bishops of the East of publishing the most malicious calumnies in circular epistles addressed to all the churches of the empire (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 30).

courage might perhaps have placed him in the rank of saints and martyrs.^a Some nice and subtle errors, which he imprudently adopted and obstinately maintained, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, excited the zeal and indignation of the Eastern churches.¹²⁹ From Egypt to the Euxine Sea, the bishops were in arms and in motion. Several councils were held, confutations were published, excommunications were pronounced, ambiguous explanations were by turns accepted and refused, treaties were concluded and violated, and at length Paul of Samosata was degraded from his episcopal character by the sentence of seventy or eighty bishops who assembled for that purpose at Antioch, and who, without consulting the rights of the clergy or people, appointed a successor by their own authority. The manifest irregularity of this proceeding increased the numbers of the discontented faction; and as Paul, who was no stranger to the arts of courts, had insinuated himself into the favour of Zenobia, he maintained above four years the possession of the episcopal house and office.^b The victory of Aurelian changed the face of the East, and the two contending parties, who applied to each other the epithets of schism and heresy, were either commanded or permitted to plead their cause before the tribunal of the conqueror. This public and very singular trial affords a convincing proof that the existence, the property, the privileges, and the internal policy of the Christians, were acknowledged, if not by the laws, at least by the magistrates of the empire. As a Pagan and as a soldier, it could scarcely be expected that Aurelian should enter into the discussion, whether the sentiments of Paul or those of his adversaries were most agreeable to the true standard of the orthodox faith. His determination, however, was founded on the general principles of equity and reason. He considered the bishops of Italy as the most impartial and respectable judges among the Christians, and, as soon as he was informed that they had unanimously approved the sentence of the council, he acquiesced in their opinion, and immediately gave orders that Paul should be compelled to relinquish the

The sentence is executed by Aurelian, A.D. 274.

¹²⁹ His heresy (like those of Noetus and Sabellius, in the same century) tended to confound the mysterious distinction of the divine persons. See Mosheim, p. 702, &c.

^a It appears nevertheless that the vices and immoralities of Paul of Samosata had much weight in the sentence pronounced against him by the bishops. The object of the letter addressed by the synod to the bishops of Rome and Alexandria was to inform them of the elange in the faith of Paul, the altercations and discussions to which it had given rise, as well as of his morals and the whole of his conduct. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. vii. c. xxx.—G.

^b "Her favourite (Zenobia's), Paul of Samosata, seems to have entertained some views of attempting an union between Judaism and Christianity; both parties rejected the unnatural alliance." Hist. of Jews, iii. 175, and Jost, Geschichte der Israeliter, iv. 167. The protection of the severe Zenobia is the only circumstance which may raise a doubt of the notorious immorality of Paul.—M.

temporal possessions belonging to an office, of which, in the judgment of his brethren, he had been regularly deprived. But while we applaud the justice, we should not overlook the policy of Aurelian, who was desirous of restoring and cementing the dependence of the provinces on the capital, by every means which could bind the interest or prejudices of any part of his subjects.¹³⁰

Amidst the frequent revolutions of the empire the Christians still flourished in peace and prosperity; and notwithstanding a celebrated æra of martyrs has been deduced from the accession of Diocletian,¹³¹ the new system of policy, introduced and maintained by the wisdom of that prince, continued, during more than eighteen years, to breathe the mildest and most liberal spirit of religious toleration. The mind of Diocletian himself was less adapted indeed to speculative inquiries than to the active labours of war and government. His prudence rendered him averse to any great innovation, and, though his temper was not very susceptible of zeal or enthusiasm, he always maintained an habitual regard for the ancient deities of the empire. But the leisure of the two empresses, of his wife Prisca, and of Valeria his daughter, permitted them to listen with more attention and respect to the truths of Christianity, which in every age has acknowledged its important obligations to female devotion.¹³² The principal eunuchs, Lucian¹³³ and Dorotheus, Gorgonius and Andrew, who attended the person, possessed the favour, and governed the household of Diocletian, protected by their powerful influence the faith which they had embraced. Their example was imitated by many of the most considerable officers of the palace, who, in their respective stations, had the care of the Imperial ornaments, of the robes, of the furniture, of the jewels, and even of the private treasury; and, though it might sometimes be incumbent on them to accompany the emperor when he sacrificed in the temple,¹³⁴ they enjoyed, with their wives, their children, and their slaves, the free exercise of the Christian religion. Diocletian and his

¹³⁰ Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vii. c. 30. We are entirely indebted to him for the curious story of Paul of Samosata.

¹³¹ The æra of martyrs, which is still in use among the Copts and the Abyssinians, must be reckoned from the 29th of August, A.D. 284; as the beginning of the Egyptian year was nineteen days earlier than the real accession of Diocletian. See Dissertation Préliminaire à l'Art de vérifier les Dates.

¹³² The expression of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 15), "sacrificio pollui coegit," implies their antecedent conversion to the faith; but does not seem to justify the assertion of Mosheim (p. 912), that they had been privately baptized.

¹³³ M. de Tillemont (Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. v. part i. p. 11, 12) has quoted from the Spicilegium of Dom Luc d'Archeri a very curious instruction which bishop Theonas composed for the use of Lucian.

¹³⁴ Lactantius de M. P. c. 10.

* On the æra of martyrs see the very curious dissertations of Mons. Letronne on some recently discovered inscriptions in Egypt and Nubia, p. 102, &c.—M.

colleagues frequently conferred the most important offices on those persons who avowed their abhorrence for the worship of the gods, but who had displayed abilities proper for the service of the state. The bishops held an honourable rank in their respective provinces, and were treated with distinction and respect, not only by the people, but by the magistrates themselves. Almost in every city the ancient churches were found insufficient to contain the increasing multitude of proselytes; and in their place more stately and capacious edifices were erected for the public worship of the faithful. The corruption of manners and principles, so forcibly lamented by Eusebius,¹³⁵ may be considered, not only as a consequence, but as a proof, of the liberty which the Christians enjoyed and abused under the reign of Diocletian. Prosperity had relaxed the nerves of discipline. Fraud, envy, and malice prevailed in every congregation. The presbyters aspired to the episcopal office, which every day became an object more worthy of their ambition. The bishops, who contended with each other for ecclesiastical pre-eminence, appeared by their conduct to claim a secular and tyrannical power in the church; and the lively faith which still distinguished the Christians from the Gentiles was shown much less in their lives than in their controversial writings.

Notwithstanding this seeming security, an attentive observer might discern some symptoms that threatened the church with a more violent persecution than any which she had yet endured.

Progress of
zeal and
superstition
among the
Pagans.

The zeal and rapid progress of the Christians awakened the Polytheists from their supine indifference in the cause of those deities whom custom and education had taught them to revere. The mutual provocations of a religious war, which had already continued above two hundred years, exasperated the animosity of the contending parties. The Pagans were incensed at the rashness of a recent and obscure sect, which presumed to accuse their countrymen of error, and to devote their ancestors to eternal misery. The habits of justifying the popular mythology against the invectives of an implacable enemy, produced in their minds some sentiments of faith and reverence for a system which they had been accustomed to consider with the most careless levity. The supernatural powers assumed by the church inspired at the same time terror and emulation. The followers of the established religion intrenched themselves behind a similar fortification of prodigies; invented new modes of sacrifice, of expiation, and of initiation; ¹³⁶ attempted to revive the credit of their

¹³⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. Ecclesiast.* l. viii. c. 1. The reader who consults the original will not accuse me of heightening the picture. Eusebius was about sixteen years of age at the accession of the emperor Diocletian.

¹³⁶ We might quote, among a great number of instances, the mysterious worship of Mithras and the Taurobolia; the latter of which became fashionable in the time of the Antonines (see a Dissertation of M. de Boze, in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des*

expiring oracles;¹³⁷ and listened with eager credulity to every impostor who flattered their prejudices by a tale of wonders.¹³⁸ Both parties seemed to acknowledge the truth of those miracles which were claimed by their adversaries; and while they were contented with ascribing them to the arts of magic, and to the power of dæmons, they mutually concurred in restoring and establishing the reign of superstition.¹³⁹ Philosophy, her most dangerous enemy, was now converted into her most useful ally. The groves of the Academy, the gardens of Epicurus, and even the portico of the Stoics, were almost deserted, as so many different schools of scepticism or impiety;¹⁴⁰ and many among the Romans were desirous that the writings of Cicero should be condemned and suppressed by the authority of the senate.¹⁴¹ The prevailing sect of the new Platonicians judged it prudent to connect themselves with the priests, whom perhaps they despised, against the Christians, whom they had reason to fear. These fashionable philosophers prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek poets; instituted mysterious rites of devotion for the use of their chosen disciples; recommended the worship of the ancient gods as the emblems or ministers of the Supreme Deity, and composed against the faith of the Gospel many elaborate treatises,¹⁴² which have since been committed to the flames by the prudence of orthodox emperors.¹⁴³

Inscriptions, tom. ii. p. 443). The romance of Apuleius is as full of devotion as of satire.

¹³⁷ The impostor Alexander very strongly recommended the oracle of Trophonius at Mallos, and those of Apollo at Claros and Miletus (Lucian, tom. ii. p. 236, edit. Reitz [Alexand. c. 29]). The last of these, whose singular history would furnish a very curious episode, was consulted by Diocletian before he published his edicts of persecution (Lactantius de M. P. c. 11).

¹³⁸ Besides the ancient stories of Pythagoras and Aristæas, the cures performed at the shrine of Æsculapius, and the fables related of Apollonius of Tyana, were frequently opposed to the miracles of Christ; though I agree with Dr. Lardner (see Testimonies, vol. iii. p. 253, 352), that, when Philostratus composed the Life of Apollonius, he had no such intention.

¹³⁹ It is seriously to be lamented that the Christian fathers, by acknowledging the supernatural, or, as they deem it, the infernal part of Paganism, destroy with their own hands the great advantage which we might otherwise derive from the liberal concessions of our adversaries.

¹⁴⁰ Julian ([tom. i.] p. 301, edit. Spanheim) expresses a pious joy that the providence of the gods had extinguished the impious sects, and for the most part destroyed the books of the Pyrrhonians and Epicureans, which had been very numerous, since Epicurus himself composed no less than 300 volumes. See Diogenes Laertius, l. x. c. 26.

¹⁴¹ *Cumque alios audiam mussitare indignanter, et dicere oportere statui per Senatum, aboleantur ut hæc scripta, quibus Christiana Religio comprobetur, et vetustatis opprimatur auctoritas. Arnobius adversus Gentes, l. iii. p. 103, 104 [p. 98, 99, ed. Ant. 1604].* He adds very properly, *Erroris convincite Ciceronem . . . nam interciperet scripta, et publicatam velle submergere lectionem, non est Deum [Deos] defendere sed veritatis testificationem timere.*

¹⁴² Lactantius (Divin. Institut. l. v. c. 2, 3) gives a very clear and spirited account of two of these philosophic adversaries of the faith. The large treatise of Porphyry against the Christians consisted of thirty books, and was composed in Sicily about the year 270.

¹⁴³ See Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. i. c. 9, and Codex Justinian. l. i. tit. i. l. 3.

Although the policy of Diocletian and the humanity of Constantius inclined them to preserve inviolate the maxims of toleration, it was soon discovered that their two associates, Maximian and Galerius, entertained the most implacable aversion for the name and religion of the Christians. The minds of those princes had never been enlightened by science; education had never softened their temper. They owed their greatness to their swords, and in their most elevated fortune they still retained their superstitious prejudices of soldiers and peasants. In the general administration of the provinces they obeyed the laws which their benefactor had established; but they frequently found occasions of exercising within their camp and palaces a secret persecution,¹⁴⁴ for which the imprudent zeal of the Christians sometimes offered the most specious pretences. A sentence of death was executed upon Maximilianus, an African youth, who had been produced by his own father before the magistrate as a sufficient and legal recruit, but who obstinately persisted in declaring that his conscience would not permit him to embrace the profession of a soldier.¹⁴⁵ It could scarcely be expected that any government should suffer the action of Marcellus the centurion to pass with impunity. On the day of a public festival, that officer threw away his belt, his arms, and the ensigns of his office, and exclaimed with a loud voice that he would obey none but Jesus Christ the eternal King, and that he renounced for ever the use of carnal weapons, and the service of an idolatrous master. The soldiers, as soon as they recovered from their astonishment, secured the person of Marcellus. He was examined in the city of Tingi by the president of that part of Mauritania; and as he was convicted by his own confession, he was condemned and beheaded for the crime of desertion.¹⁴⁶ Examples of such a nature savour much less of religious persecution than of martial or even civil law: but they served to

Maximian and Galerius punish a few Christian soldiers.

¹⁴⁴ Eusebius, l. viii. c. 4, c. 17. He limits the number of military martyrs, by a remarkable expression (*σπανίως τούτων εἰς σου καὶ δύστητος*), of which neither his Latin nor French translator have rendered the energy. Notwithstanding the authority of Eusebius, and the silence of Lactantius, Ambrose, Sulpicius, Orosius, &c., it has been long believed that the Thebæan legion, consisting of 6000 Christians, suffered martyrdom by the order of Maximian, in the valley of the Pennine Alps. The story was first published about the middle of the vth century, by Eucherius bishop of Lyons, who received it from certain persons, who received it from Isaac bishop of Geneva, who is said to have received it from Theodore bishop of Octodurum. The abbey of St. Maurice still subsists, a rich monument of the credulity of Sigismund, king of Burgundy. See an excellent Dissertation in the xxxvth volume of the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, p. 427-454.

¹⁴⁵ See the *Acta Sincera*, p. 299. The accounts of his martyrdom, and of that of Marcellus, bear every mark of truth and authenticity.

¹⁴⁶ *Acta Sincera*, p. 302.^a

^a M. Guizot here justly observes that gods which induced Marcellus to act in it was the necessity of sacrificing to the this manner.—M.

alienate the mind of the emperors, to justify the severity of Galerius, who dismissed a great number of Christian officers from their employments; and to authorise the opinion that a sect of enthusiasts, which avowed principles so repugnant to the public safety, must either remain useless, or would soon become dangerous subjects of the empire.

After the success of the Persian war had raised the hopes and the reputation of Galerius, he passed a winter with Diocletian in the palace of Nicomedia; and the fate of Christianity became the object of their secret consultations.¹⁴⁷ The experienced emperor was still inclined to pursue measures of lenity; and though he readily consented to exclude the Christians from holding any employments in the household or the army, he urged in the strongest terms the danger as well as cruelty of shedding the blood of those deluded fanatics. Galerius at length extorted from him the permission of summoning a council, composed of a few persons the most distinguished in the civil and military departments of the state. The important question was agitated in their presence, and those ambitious courtiers easily discerned that it was incumbent on them to second, by their eloquence, the importunate violence of the Cæsar. It may be presumed that they insisted on every topic which might interest the pride, the piety, or the fears, of their sovereign in the destruction of Christianity. Perhaps they represented that the glorious work of the deliverance of the empire was left imperfect, as long as an independent people was permitted to subsist and multiply in the heart of the provinces. The Christians (it might speciously be alleged), renouncing the gods and the institutions of Rome, had constituted a distinct republic, which might yet be suppressed before it had acquired any military force; but which was already governed by its own laws and magistrates, was possessed of a public treasure, and was intimately connected in all its parts by the frequent assemblies of the bishops, to whose decrees their numerous and opulent congregations yielded an implicit obedience. Arguments like these may seem to have determined the reluctant mind of Diocletian to embrace a new system of persecution: but though we may suspect, it is not in our power to relate, the secret intrigues of the palace, the private views and resentments, the jealousy of women or eunuchs, and all those trifling but decisive causes which so often influence the fate of empires and the councils of the wisest monarchs.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ De M. P. c. 11. Lactantius (or whoever was the author of this little treatise) was, at that time, an inhabitant of Nicomedia; but it seems difficult to conceive how he could acquire so accurate a knowledge of what passed in the Imperial cabinet.

¹⁴⁸ The only circumstance which we can discover is the devotion and jealousy of the mother of Galerius. She is described by Lactantius as *Deorum montium cultrix; mulier admodum superstitiosa*. She had a great influence over her son, and was offended by the disregard of some of her Christian servants.

The pleasure of the emperors was at length signified to the Christians, who, during the course of this melancholy winter, had expected, with anxiety, the result of so many secret consultations. The twenty-third of February, which coincided with the Roman festival of the Terminalia,¹⁴⁹ was appointed (whether from accident or design) to set bounds to the progress of Christianity. At the earliest dawn of day the Prætorian præfect,¹⁵⁰ accompanied by several generals, tribunes, and officers of the revenue, repaired to the principal church of Nicomedia, which was situated on an eminence in the most populous and beautiful part of the city. The doors were instantly broke open; they rushed into the sanctuary; and as they searched in vain for some visible object of worship, they were obliged to content themselves with committing to the flames the volumes of Holy Scripture. The ministers of Diocletian were followed by a numerous body of guards and pioneers, who marched in order of battle, and were provided with all the instruments used in the destruction of fortified cities. By their incessant labour, a sacred edifice, which towered above the Imperial palace, and had long excited the indignation and envy of the Gentiles, was in a few hours levelled with the ground.¹⁵¹

Demolition of
the church of
Nicomedia,
A.D. 303.
Feb. 23.

The next day the general edict of persecution was published;¹⁵² and though Diocletian, still averse to the effusion of blood, had moderated the fury of Galerius, who proposed that every one refusing to offer sacrifice should immediately be burnt alive, the penalties inflicted on the obstinacy of the Christians might be deemed sufficiently rigorous and effectual. It was enacted that their churches, in all the provinces of the empire, should be demolished to their foundations; and the punishment of death was denounced against all who should presume to hold any secret assemblies for the purpose of religious worship. The philosophers, who now assumed the unworthy office of directing the blind zeal of persecution, had diligently studied the nature and genius of the Christian religion; and as they were not ignorant that the speculative doctrines of the faith were supposed to be contained in the writings of the prophets, of the evangelists, and of the apostles, they most probably suggested the order that the bishops and presbyters should

The first edict
against the
Christians,
Feb. 24.

¹⁴⁹ The worship and festival of the god Terminus are elegantly illustrated by M. de Boze, Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. i. p. 50.

¹⁵⁰ In our only MS. of Lactantius we read *profectus*; but reason, and the authority of all the critics, allow us, instead of that word, which destroys the sense of the passage, to substitute *præfectus*.

¹⁵¹ Lactantius, de M. P. c. 12, gives a very lively picture of the destruction of the church.

¹⁵² Mosheim (p. 922-926), from many scattered passages of Lactantius and Eusebius, has collected a very just and accurate notion of this edict; though he sometimes deviates into conjecture and refinement.

deliver all their sacred books into the hands of the magistrates; who were commanded, under the severest penalties, to burn them in a public and solemn manner. By the same edict, the property of the church was at once confiscated; and the several parts of which it might consist were either sold to the highest bidder, united to the Imperial domain, bestowed on the cities and corporations, or granted to the solicitations of rapacious courtiers. After taking such effectual measures to abolish the worship and to dissolve the government of the Christians, it was thought necessary to subject to the most intolerable hardships the condition of those perverse individuals who should still reject the religion of nature, of Rome, and of their ancestors. Persons of a liberal birth were declared incapable of holding any honours or employments; slaves were for ever deprived of the hopes of freedom; and the whole body of the people were put out of the protection of the law. The judges were authorised to hear and to determine every action that was brought against a Christian. But the Christians were not permitted to complain of any injury which they themselves had suffered; and thus those unfortunate sectaries were exposed to the severity, while they were excluded from the benefits, of public justice. This new species of martyrdom, so painful and lingering, so obscure and ignominious, was, perhaps, the most proper to weary the constancy of the faithful: nor can it be doubted that the passions and interest of mankind were disposed on this occasion to second the designs of the emperors. But the policy of a well-ordered government must sometimes have interposed in behalf of the oppressed Christians; nor was it possible for the Roman princes entirely to remove the apprehension of punishment, or to connive at every act of fraud and violence, without exposing their own authority and the rest of their subjects to the most alarming dangers.¹⁵³

Zeal and
punishment
of a Chris-
tian.

This edict was scarcely exhibited to the public view, in the most conspicuous place of Nicomedia, before it was torn down by the hands of a Christian, who expressed at the same time, by the bitterest invectives, his contempt as well as abhorrence for such impious and tyrannical governors. His offence, according to the mildest laws, amounted to treason, and deserved death. And if it be true that he was a person of rank and education, those circumstances could serve only to aggravate his guilt. He was burnt, or rather roasted, by a slow fire; and his executioners, zealous to revenge the personal insult which had been offered to the emperors, exhausted every refinement of cruelty, without being able to subdue

¹⁵³ Many ages afterwards Edward I. practised, with great success, the same mode of persecution against the clergy of England. See Hume's History of England, vol. ii. p. 300, last 4to. edition.

his patience, or to alter the steady and insulting smile which, in his dying agonies, he still preserved in his countenance. The Christians, though they confessed that his conduct had not been strictly conformable to the laws of prudence, admired the divine fervour of his zeal; and the excessive commendations which they lavished on the memory of their hero and martyr contributed to fix a deep impression of terror and hatred in the mind of Diocletian.¹⁵⁴

His fears were soon alarmed by the view of a danger from which he very narrowly escaped. Within fifteen days the palace of Nicomedia, and even the bedchamber of Diocletian, were twice in flames; and though both times they were extinguished without any material damage, the singular repetition of the fire was justly considered as an evident proof that it had not been the effect of chance or negligence. The suspicion naturally fell on the Christians; and it was suggested, with some degree of probability, that those desperate fanatics, provoked by their present sufferings, and apprehensive of impending calamities, had entered into a conspiracy with their faithful brethren, the eunuchs of the palace, against the lives of two emperors whom they detested as the irreconcilable enemies of the church of God. Jealousy and resentment prevailed in every breast, but especially in that of Diocletian. A great number of persons, distinguished either by the offices which they had filled, or by the favour which they had enjoyed, were thrown into prison. Every mode of torture was put in practice, and the court, as well as city, was polluted with many bloody executions.¹⁵⁵ But as it was found impossible to extort any discovery of this mysterious transaction, it seems incumbent on us either to presume the innocence, or to admire the resolution, of the sufferers. A few days afterwards Galerius hastily withdrew himself from Nicomedia, declaring that, if he delayed his departure from that devoted palace, he should fall a sacrifice to the rage of the Christians. The ecclesiastical historians, from whom alone we derive a partial and imperfect knowledge of this persecution, are at a loss how to account for the fears and danger of the emperors. Two of these writers, a prince and a rhetorician, were eye-witnesses of the fire of Nicomedia.

Fire of the palace of Nicomedia imputed to the Christians.

¹⁵⁴ Lactantius only calls him *quidam*, *etsi non recte, magno tamen animo*, &c., M. P. c. 13. Eusebius (l. viii. c. 5) adorns him with secular honours. Neither have condescended to mention his name; but the Greeks celebrate his memory under that of John. See Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclésiastiques*, tom. v. part ii. p. 320.

¹⁵⁵ Lactantius de M. P. c. 13, 14 [14, 15]. *Potentissimi quondam Eunuchi necati, per quos Palatium et ipse constabat.* Eusebius (l. viii. c. 6) mentions the cruel executions of the eunuchs Gorgonius and Dorotheus, and of Anthimus bishop of Nicomedia; and both those writers describe, in a vague but tragical manner, the horrid scenes which were acted even in the Imperial presence.

The one ascribes it to lightning and the divine wrath, the other affirms that it was kindled by the malice of Galerius himself.¹⁵⁶

As the edict against the Christians was designed for a general law of the whole empire, and as Diocletian and Galerius, though they might not wait for the consent, were assured of the concurrence, of the Western princes, it would appear more consonant to our ideas of policy that the governors of all the provinces should have received secret instructions to publish, on one and the same day, this declaration of war within their respective departments. It was at least to be expected that the convenience of the public highways and established posts would have enabled the emperors to transmit their orders with the utmost despatch from the palace of Nicomedia to the extremities of the Roman world; and that they would not have suffered fifty days to elapse before the edict was published in Syria, and near four months before it was signified to the cities of Africa.¹⁵⁷ This delay may perhaps be imputed to the cautious temper of Diocletian, who had yielded a reluctant consent to the measures of persecution, and who was desirous of trying the experiment under his more immediate eye before he gave way to the disorders and discontent which it must inevitably occasion in the distant provinces. At first, indeed, the magistrates were restrained from the effusion of blood; but the use of every other severity was permitted, and even recommended to their zeal; nor could the Christians, though they cheerfully resigned the ornaments of their churches, resolve to interrupt their religious assemblies, or to deliver their sacred books to the flames. The pious obstinacy of Felix, an African bishop, appears to have embarrassed the subordinate ministers of the government. The curator of his city sent him in chains to the proconsul. The proconsul transmitted him to the Prætorian præfect of Italy; and Felix, who disdained even to give an evasive answer, was at length beheaded at Venusia, in Lucania, a place on which the birth of Horace has conferred fame.¹⁵⁸ This precedent, and

¹⁵⁶ See Lactantius, Eusebius, and Constantine, ad Cœtum Sanctorum, c. xxv. Eusebius confesses his ignorance of the cause of this fire.*

¹⁵⁷ Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiast. tom. v. part i. p. 43.

¹⁵⁸ See the Acta Sincera of Ruinart, p. 353; those of Felix of Thibara, or Tibiur, appear much less corrupted than in the other editions, which afford a lively specimen of legendary licence.

* As the history of these times affords us no example of any attempts made by the Christians against their persecutors, we have no reason, not the slightest probability, to attribute to them the fire in the palace; and the authority of Constantine and Lactantius remains to explain it. M. de Tillemont has shown how they can

be reconciled. Hist. des Empereurs, Vie de Dioclétien, xix.—G. Had it been done by a Christian, it would probably have been a fanatic, who would have avowed and gloried in it. Tillemont's supposition that the fire was first caused by lightning, and fed and increased by the malice of Galerius, seems singularly improbable.—M

perhaps some Imperial rescript, which was issued in consequence of it, appeared to authorise the governors of provinces in punishing with death the refusal of the Christians to deliver up their sacred books. There were undoubtedly many persons who embraced this opportunity of obtaining the crown of martyrdom; but there were likewise too many who purchased an ignominious life by discovering and betraying the Holy Scripture into the hands of infidels. A great number even of bishops and presbyters acquired, by this criminal compliance, the opprobrious epithet of *Traditors*; and their offence was productive of much present scandal and of much future discord in the African church.¹⁵⁹

The copies as well as the versions of Scripture were already so multiplied in the empire, that the most severe inquisition ^{Demolition of the churches.} could no longer be attended with any fatal consequences; and even the sacrifice of those volumes which, in every congregation, were preserved for public use, required the consent of some treacherous and unworthy Christians. But the ruin of the churches was easily effected by the authority of the government and by the labour of the Pagans. In some provinces, however, the magistrates contented themselves with shutting up the places of religious worship. In others they more literally complied with the terms of the edict; and, after taking away the doors, the benches, and the pulpit, which they burnt as it were in a funeral pile, they completely demolished the remainder of the edifice.¹⁶⁰ It is perhaps to this melancholy occasion that we should apply a very remarkable story, which is related with so many circumstances of variety and improbability that it serves rather to excite than to satisfy our curiosity. In a small town in Phrygia, of whose name as well as situation we are left ignorant, it should seem that the magistrates and the body of the people had embraced the Christian faith; and as some resistance might be apprehended to the execution of the edict, the governor of the province was supported by a numerous detachment of legionaries. On their approach the citizens threw themselves into the church, with the resolution either of defending by arms that sacred edifice or of perishing in its ruins. They indignantly rejected the notice and permission which was given them to retire, till the soldiers, provoked by their obstinate refusal, set fire to the building on all sides, and consumed, by this extra-

¹⁵⁹ See the first book of Optatus of Milevis against the Donatists. Paris, 1700, edit. Dupin. He lived under the reign of Valens.

¹⁶⁰ The ancient monuments, published at the end of Optatus, p. 261, &c., describe, in a very circumstantial manner, the proceedings of the governors in the destruction of churches. They made a minute inventory of the plate, &c., which they found in them. That of the church of Cirta, in Numidia, is still extant. It consisted of two chalices of gold and six of silver; six urns, one kettle, seven lamps, all likewise of silver; besides a large quantity of brass utensils and wearing apparel.

ordinary kind of martyrdom, a great number of Phrygians, with their wives and children.¹⁶¹

Some slight disturbances, though they were suppressed almost as soon as excited, in Syria and the frontiers of Armenia, afforded the enemies of the church a very plausible occasion to insinuate that those troubles had been secretly fomented by the intrigues of the bishops, who had already forgotten their ostentatious professions of passive and unlimited obedience.¹⁶² The resentment, or the fears, of Diocletian at length transported him beyond the bounds of moderation which he had hitherto preserved, and he declared, in a series of cruel edicts, his intention of abolishing the Christian name. By the first of these edicts the governors of the provinces were directed to apprehend all persons of the ecclesiastical order; and the prisons destined for the vilest criminals were soon filled with a multitude of bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers, and exorcists. By a second edict the magistrates were commanded to employ every method of severity which might reclaim them from their odious superstition, and oblige them to return to the established worship of the gods. This rigorous order was extended, by a subsequent edict, to the whole body of Christians, who were exposed to a violent and general persecution.¹⁶³ Instead of those salutary restraints which had required the direct and solemn testimony of an accuser, it became the duty as well as the interest of the Imperial officers to discover, to pursue, and to torment the most obnoxious among the faithful. Heavy penalties were denounced against all who should presume to save a proscribed sectary from the just indignation of the gods and of the emperors. Yet, notwithstanding the severity of this law, the virtuous courage of many of the Pagans, in concealing their friends or relations, affords an honourable proof that the rage of superstition had not extinguished in their minds the sentiments of nature and humanity.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Lactantius (Institut. Divin. v. 11) confines the calamity to the *conventiculum*, with its congregation. Eusebius (viii. 11) extends it to a whole city, and introduces something very like a regular siege. His ancient Latin translator, Rufinus, adds the important circumstance of the permission given to the inhabitants of retiring from thence. As Phrygia reached to the confines of Isauria, it is possible that the restless temper of those independent barbarians may have contributed to this misfortune.

¹⁶² Eusebius, l. viii. c. 6. M. de Valois (with some probability) thinks that he has discovered the Syrian rebellion in an oration of Libanius; and that it was a rash attempt of the tribune Eugenius, who with only five hundred men seized Antioch, and might perhaps allure the Christians by the promise of religious toleration. From Eusebius (l. ix. c. 8), as well as from Moses of Chorene (Hist. Armen. l. ii. 77, &c.), it may be inferred that Christianity was already introduced into Armenia.

¹⁶³ See Mosheim, p. 938; the text of Eusebius very plainly shows that the governors, whose powers were enlarged, not restrained, by the new laws, could punish with death the most obstinate Christians as an example to their brethren.

¹⁶⁴ Athanasius, p. 833, ap. Tillemont, Mém. Ecclésiast. tom. v. part i. p. 90.

Diocletian had no sooner published his edicts against the Christians, than, as if he had been desirous of committing to other hands the work of persecution, he divested himself of the Imperial purple. The character and situation of his colleagues and successors sometimes urged them to enforce, and sometimes inclined them to suspend, the execution of these rigorous laws; nor can we acquire a just and distinct idea of this important period of ecclesiastical history unless we separately consider the state of Christianity, in the different parts of the empire, during the space of ten years which elapsed between the first edicts of Diocletian and the final peace of the church.

The mild and humane temper of Constantius was averse to the oppression of any part of his subjects. The principal offices of his palace were exercised by Christians. He loved their persons, esteemed their fidelity, and entertained not any dislike to their religious principles. But as long as Constantius remained in the subordinate station of Cæsar, it was not in his power openly to reject the edicts of Diocletian, or to disobey the commands of Maximian. His authority contributed, however, to alleviate the sufferings which he pitied and abhorred. He consented with reluctance to the ruin of the churches, but he ventured to protect the Christians themselves from the fury of the populace and from the rigour of the laws. The provinces of Gaul (under which we may probably include those of Britain) were indebted for the singular tranquillity which they enjoyed to the gentle interposition of their sovereign.¹⁶⁵ But Datianus, the president or governor of Spain, actuated either by zeal or policy, chose rather to execute the public edicts of the emperors than to understand the secret intentions of Constantius; and it can scarcely be doubted that his provincial administration was stained with the blood of a few martyrs.¹⁶⁶ The elevation of Constantius to the supreme and independent dignity of Augustus gave a free scope to the exercise of his virtues, and the shortness of his reign did not prevent him from establishing a system of toleration of which he left the precept and the example to his son

General idea
of the per-
secution

in the
Western
provinces
under Con-
stantius and
Constantine;

¹⁶⁵ Eusebius, l. viii. c. 13. Lactantius de M. P. c. 15. Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprian. xi. 75) represents them as inconsistent with each other. But the former evidently speaks of Constantius in the station of Cæsar, and the latter of the same prince in the rank of Augustus.

¹⁶⁶ Datianus is mentioned in Gruter's Inscriptions as having determined the limits between the territories of Pax Julia and those of Ebora, both cities in the southern part of Lusitania. If we recollect the neighbourhood of those places to Cape St. Vincent, we may suspect that the celebrated deacon and martyr of that name has been inaccurately assigned by Prudentius, &c., to Saragossa or Valentia. See the pompous history of his sufferings, in the Mémoires de Tillemont, tom. v. part ii. p. 58-85. Some critics are of opinion that the department of Constantius, as Cæsar, did not include Spain, which still continued under the immediate jurisdiction of Maximian.

Constantine. His fortunate son, from the first moment of his accession declaring himself the protector of the church, at length deserved the appellation of the first emperor who publicly professed and established the Christian religion. The motives of his conversion, as they may variously be deduced from benevolence, from policy, from conviction, or from remorse, and the progress of the revolution, which, under his powerful influence and that of his sons, rendered Christianity the reigning religion of the Roman empire, will form a very interesting and important chapter in the third volume of this history. At present it may be sufficient to observe that every victory of Constantine was productive of some relief or benefit to the church.

The provinces of Italy and Africa experienced a short but violent persecution. The rigorous edicts of Diocletian were strictly and cheerfully executed by his associate Maximian, who in Italy and Africa, under Maximian and Severus; had long hated the Christians, and who delighted in acts of blood and violence. In the autumn of the first year of the persecution the two emperors met at Rome to celebrate their triumph; several oppressive laws appear to have issued from their secret consultations, and the diligence of the magistrates was animated by the presence of their sovereigns. After Diocletian had divested himself of the purple, Italy and Africa were administered under the name of Severus, and were exposed, without defence, to the implacable resentment of his master Galerius. Among the martyrs of Rome, Adauctus deserves the notice of posterity. He was of a noble family in Italy, and had raised himself, through the successive honours of the palace, to the important office of treasurer of the private demesnes. Adauctus is the more remarkable for being the only person of rank and distinction who appears to have suffered death during the whole course of this general persecution.¹⁶⁷

The revolt of Maxentius immediately restored peace to the under Maxentius; churches of Italy and Africa, and the same tyrant who oppressed every other class of his subjects showed himself just, humane, and even partial, towards the afflicted Christians. He depended on their gratitude and affection, and very naturally presumed that the injuries which they had suffered, and the dangers which they still apprehended, from his most inveterate enemy, would secure the fidelity of a party already considerable by their numbers and opulence.¹⁶⁸ Even the conduct of Maxentius towards the

¹⁶⁷ Eusebius, l. viii. c. 11. Gruter, Inscrip. p. 1171, No. 18. Rufinus has mistaken the office of Adauctus, as well as the place of his martyrdom.*

¹⁶⁸ Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14. But as Maxentius was vanquished by Constantine, it suited the purpose of Lactantius to place his death among those of the persecutors.

* M. Guizot suggests the powerful eunuchs of the palace, Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and Andrew, admitted by Gibbon himself to have been put to death, p. 271.—M.

bishops of Rome and Carthage may be considered as the proof of his toleration, since it is probable that the most orthodox princes would adopt the same measures with regard to their established clergy. Marcellus, the former of those prelates, had thrown the capital into confusion by the severe penance which he imposed on a great number of Christians who, during the late persecution, had renounced or dissembled their religion. The rage of faction broke out in frequent and violent seditions; the blood of the faithful was shed by each other's hands; and the exile of Marcellus, whose prudence seems to have been less eminent than his zeal, was found to be the only measure capable of restoring peace to the distracted church of Rome.¹⁶⁹ The behaviour of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, appears to have been still more reprehensible. A deacon of that city had published a libel against the emperor. The offender took refuge in the episcopal palace, and, though it was somewhat early to advance any claims of ecclesiastical immunities, the bishop refused to deliver him up to the officers of justice. For this treasonable resistance Mensurius was summoned to court, and, instead of receiving a legal sentence of death or banishment, he was permitted, after a short examination, to return to his diocese.¹⁷⁰ Such was the happy condition of the Christian subjects of Maxentius, that, whenever they were desirous of procuring for their own use any bodies of martyrs, they were obliged to purchase them from the most distant provinces of the East. A story is related of Aglae, a Roman lady, descended from a consular family, and possessed of so ample an estate that it required the management of seventy-three stewards. Among these Boniface was the favourite of his mistress, and, as Aglae mixed love with devotion, it is reported that he was admitted to share her bed. Her fortune enabled her to gratify the pious desire of obtaining some sacred relics from the East. She intrusted Boniface with a considerable sum of gold and a large quantity of aromatics, and her lover, attended by twelve horsemen and three covered chariots, undertook a remote pilgrimage as far as Tarsus in Cilicia.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ The epitaph of Marcellus is to be found in Gruter, Inscript. p. 1172, No. 3, and it contains all that we know of his history. Marcellinus and Marcellus, whose names follow in the list of popes, are supposed by many critics to be different persons; but the learned Abbé de Longuerue was convinced that they were one and the same.

Veridicus rector lapsis quia crimina flere
Prædixit miseris, fuit omnibus hostis amarus.
Hinc furor, hinc odium; sequitur discordia, lites,
Seditio, cædes; solvuntur fœdera pacis.
Crimen ob alterius, Christum qui in pace negavit
Finiibus expulsus patriæ est feritate Tyranni.
Hæc breviter Damasus voluit comperta referre:
Marcelli populus meritum cognoscere posset.

We may observe that Damasus was made bishop of Rome A.D. 366.

¹⁷⁰ Optatus contr. Donatist. l. i. c. 17, 18.

¹⁷¹ The Acts of the Passion of St. Boniface, which abound in miracles and declama-

The sanguinary temper of Galerius, the first and principal author of the persecution, was formidable to those Christians whom their misfortunes had placed within the limits of his dominions; and it may fairly be presumed that many persons of a middle rank, who were not confined by the chains either of wealth or of poverty, very frequently deserted their native country, and sought a refuge in the milder climate of the West. As long as he commanded only the armies and provinces of Illyricum, he could with difficulty either find or make a considerable number of martyrs in a warlike country which had entertained the missionaries of the Gospel with more coldness and reluctance than any other part of the empire.¹⁷² But when Galerius had obtained the supreme power and the government of the East, he indulged in their fullest extent his zeal and cruelty, not only in the provinces of Thrace and Asia, which acknowledged his immediate jurisdiction, but in those of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where Maximin gratified his own inclination by yielding a rigorous obedience to the stern commands of his benefactor.¹⁷³ The frequent disappointments of his ambitious views, the experience of six years of persecution, and the salutary reflections which a lingering and painful distemper suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length convinced him that the most violent efforts of despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole people, or to subdue their religious prejudices. Desirous of repairing the mischief that he had occasioned, he published in his own name, and in those of Licinius and Constantine, a general edict, which, after a pompous recital of the Imperial titles, proceeded in the following manner:

Galerius publishes an edict of toleration. "Among the important cares which have occupied our mind for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and re-establish all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. We were particularly desirous of reclaiming into the way of reason and nature the deluded Christians who had renounced the religion and ceremonies instituted by their fathers, and, presumptuously

tion, are published by Ruinart (p. 283-291), both in Greek and Latin, from the authority of very ancient manuscripts.*

¹⁷² During the four first centuries there exist few traces of either bishops or bishoprics in the western Illyricum. It has been thought probable that the primate of Milan extended his jurisdiction over Sirmium, the capital of that great province. See the *Geographia Sacra* of Charles de St. Paul, p. 68-76, with the observations of Lucas Holstenius.

¹⁷³ The viiith book of Eusebius, as well as the supplement concerning the martyrs of Palestine, principally relate to the persecution of Galerius and Maximin. The general lamentations with which Lactantius opens the vth book of his *Divine Institutions* allude to their cruelty.

* Sir D. Dalrymple (Lord Hailes) calls the story of Aglae and Boniface as of equal authority with our popular histories of Whittington and Dickwharf. *Christian Antiquities*, ii. 64.—M.

“despising the practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant laws
 “and opinions according to the dictates of their fancy, and had
 “collected a various society from the different provinces of our em-
 “pire. The edicts which we have published to enforce the worship
 “of the gods having exposed many of the Christians to danger and
 “distress, many having suffered death, and many more, who still
 “persist in their impious folly, being left destitute of *any* public
 “exercise of religion, we are disposed to extend to those unhappy
 “men the effects of our wonted clemency. We permit them, there-
 “fore, freely to profess their private opinions, and to assemble in
 “their conventicles without fear or molestation, provided always that
 “they preserve a due respect to the established laws and govern-
 “ment. By another rescript we shall signify our intentions to the
 “judges and magistrates, and we hope that our indulgence will
 “engage the Christians to offer up their prayers to the Deity whom
 “they adore for our safety and prosperity, for their own, and for that
 “of the republic.”¹⁷⁴ It is not usually in the language of edicts
 and manifestos that we should search for the real character or the
 secret motives of princes; but as these were the words of a dying
 emperor, his situation, perhaps, may be admitted as a pledge of his
 sincerity.

When Galerius subscribed this edict of toleration, he was well
 assured that Licinius would readily comply with the inclina-
 tions of his friend and benefactor, and that any measures in Peace of the church.
 favour of the Christians would obtain the approbation of Constantine.
 But the emperor would not venture to insert in the preamble the
 name of Maximin, whose consent was of the greatest importance, and
 who succeeded a few days afterwards to the provinces of Asia. In
 the first six months, however, of his new reign, Maximin affected to
 adopt the prudent counsels of his predecessor; and though he never
 condescended to secure the tranquillity of the church by a public
 edict, Sabinus, his Prætorian præfect, addressed a circular letter to
 all the governors and magistrates of the provinces, expatiating on
 the Imperial clemency, acknowledging the invincible obstinacy of the
 Christians, and directing the officers of justice to cease their in-
 effectual prosecutions, and to connive at the secret assemblies of
 those enthusiasts. In consequence of these orders, great numbers of

¹⁷⁴ Eusebius (l. viii. c. 17) has given us a Greek version, and Lactantius (de M. P. c. 34) the Latin original, of this memorable edict. Neither of these writers seems to recollect how directly it contradicts whatever they have just affirmed of the remorse and repentance of Galerius.*

* But Gibbon has answered this by his just observation, that it is not in the lan-
 guage of edicts and manifestos that we should search for the secret motives of
 princes.—M.

Christians were released from prison, or delivered from the mines. The confessors, singing hymns of triumph, returned into their own countries; and those who had yielded to the violence of the tempest, solicited with tears of repentance their re-admission into the bosom of the church.¹⁷⁵

But this treacherous calm was of short duration; nor could the Christians of the East place any confidence in the character of their sovereign. Cruelty and superstition were the ruling passions of the soul of Maximin. The former suggested the means, the latter pointed out the objects, of persecution. The emperor was devoted to the worship of the gods, to the study of magic, and to the belief of oracles. The prophets or philosophers, whom he revered as the favourites of Heaven, were frequently raised to the government of provinces, and admitted into his most secret councils. They easily convinced him that the Christians had been indebted for their victories to their regular discipline, and that the weakness of polytheism had principally flowed from a want of union and subordination among the ministers of religion. A system of government was therefore instituted, which was evidently copied from the policy of the church. In all the great cities of the empire, the temples were repaired and beautified by the order of Maximin, and the officiating priests of the various deities were subjected to the authority of a superior pontiff destined to oppose the bishop, and to promote the cause of paganism. These pontiffs acknowledged, in their turn, the supreme jurisdiction of the metropolitans or high priests of the province, who acted as the immediate vicegerents of the emperor himself. A white robe was the ensign of their dignity; and these new prelates were carefully selected from the most noble and opulent families. By the influence of the magistrates, and of the sacerdotal order, a great number of dutiful addresses were obtained, particularly from the cities of Nicomedia, Antioch, and Tyre, which artfully represented the well-known intentions of the court as the general sense of the people; solicited the emperor to consult the laws of justice rather than the dictates of his clemency; expressed their abhorrence of the Christians, and humbly prayed that those impious sectaries might at least be excluded from the limits of their respective territories. The answer of Maximin to the address which he obtained from the citizens of Tyre is still extant. He praises their zeal and devotion in terms of the highest satisfaction, descants on the obstinate impiety of the Christians, and betrays, by the readiness with which he consents to their banishment, that he considered himself as receiving, rather than as conferring, an obligation. The priests as

¹⁷⁵ Eusebius, l. ix. c. 1. He inserts the epistle of the præfect.

well as the magistrates were empowered to enforce the execution of his edicts, which were engraved on tables of brass; and though it was recommended to them to avoid the effusion of blood, the most cruel and ignominious punishments were inflicted on the refractory Christians.¹⁷⁶

The Asiatic Christians had everything to dread from the severity of a bigoted monarch who prepared his measures of violence with such deliberate policy. But a few months had scarcely elapsed before the edicts published by the two Western emperors obliged Maximin to suspend the prosecution of his designs: the civil war which he so rashly undertook against Licinius employed all his attention; and the defeat and death of Maximin soon delivered the church from the last and most implacable of her enemies.¹⁷⁷

In this general view of the persecution which was first authorised by the edicts of Diocletian, I have purposely refrained from describing the particular sufferings and deaths of the Christian martyrs. It would have been an easy task, from the history of Eusebius, from the declamations of Lactantius, and from the most ancient acts, to collect a long series of horrid and disgusting pictures, and to fill many pages with racks and scourges, with iron hooks and red-hot beds, and with all the variety of tortures which fire and steel, savage beasts, and more savage executioners, could inflict on the human body. These melancholy scenes might be enlivened by a crowd of visions and miracles destined either to delay the death, to celebrate the triumph, or to discover the relics of those canonised saints who suffered for the name of Christ. But I cannot determine what I ought to transcribe, till I am satisfied how much I ought to believe. The gravest of the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius himself, indirectly confesses that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion.¹⁷⁸ Such an acknowledg-

End of the persecutions.

Probable account of the sufferings of the martyrs and confessors.

¹⁷⁶ See Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14, l. ix. c. 2-8. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. These writers agree in representing the arts of Maximin: but the former relates the execution of several martyrs, while the latter expressly affirms, *occidi servos Dei vetuit*.

¹⁷⁷ A few days before his death he published a very ample edict of toleration, in which he imputes all the severities which the Christians suffered to the judges and governors, who had misunderstood his intentions. See the edict in Eusebius, l. ix. c. 10.

¹⁷⁸ Such is the *fair* deduction from two remarkable passages in Eusebius, l. viii. c. 2, and de Martyr. Palestin. c. 12. The prudence of the historian has exposed his own character to censure and suspicion. It was well known that he himself had been thrown into prison; and it was suggested that he had purchased his deliverance by some dishonourable compliance. The reproach was urged in his lifetime, and even in his presence, at the council of Tyre. See Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclésiastiques*, tom. viii. part i. p. 67.^a

^a Historical criticism does not consist in rejecting indiscriminately all the facts which do not agree with a particular system, as Gibbon does in this chapter, in which, except at the last extremity, he will not consent to believe a martyrdom. Authorities are to be weighed, not excluded from examination. Now the Pagan his-

ment will naturally excite a suspicion that a writer who has so openly violated one of the fundamental laws of history has not paid a very strict regard to the observance of the other; and the suspicion will derive additional credit from the character of Eusebius,^a which was less tinctured with credulity, and more practised in the arts of courts, than that of almost any of his contemporaries. On some particular occasions, when the magistrates were exasperated by some personal motives of interest or resentment, when the zeal of the martyrs urged them to forget the rules of prudence, and perhaps of decency, to overturn the altars, to pour out imprecations against the emperors, or to strike the judge as he sat on his tribunal, it may be presumed that every mode of torture which cruelty could invent, or constancy could endure, was exhausted on those devoted victims.¹⁷⁹ Two circumstances, however, have been unwarily mentioned, which insinuate that the general treatment of the Christians who had been apprehended by the officers of justice was less intolerable than it is usually imagined to have been. 1. The confessors who were condemned to work in the mines were permitted by the humanity or the negligence of their keepers to build chapels, and freely to profess their religion in the midst of those dreary habitations.¹⁸⁰ 2. The bishops were obliged to check and to censure the forward zeal of the Christians, who voluntarily threw themselves into the hands of the magistrates. Some of these were persons oppressed by poverty and debts, who blindly sought to terminate a miserable existence by a glorious death. Others were allured by the hope that a short confinement would

¹⁷⁹ The ancient, and perhaps authentic, account of the sufferings of Tarachus and his companions (*Acta Sincera* Ruinart, p. 419-448) is filled with strong expressions of resentment and contempt, which could not fail of irritating the magistrate. The behaviour of Ædesius to Hierocles, præfect of Egypt, was still more extraordinary. *Λόγοις τε καὶ ἔργοις τὸν δικαστὴν . . . περιπαλόν.* Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 5.

¹⁸⁰ Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13.

torians justify in many places the details which have been transmitted to us by the historians of the church concerning the tortures endured by the Christians. Celsus reproaches the Christians with holding their assemblies in secret, on account of the fear inspired by their sufferings; "for when you are arrested," he says, "you are dragged to punishment; and, before you are put to death, you have to suffer all kinds of tortures." Origen cont. Cels. l. i. ii. vi. viii. passim. Libanius, the panegyrist of Julian, says, while speaking of the Christians, "Those who followed a corrupt religion were in continual apprehensions; they feared lest Julian should invent tortures still more refined than those to which they had been exposed before, as mutilation, burning alive, &c.;

for the emperors had inflicted upon them all these barbarities." Lib. Parent. in Julian. ap. Fab. Bibl. Græc. No. 9, No. 58, p. 283.—G.

^a This sentence of Gibbon has given rise to several learned dissertations: Möller, de fide Eusebii Cæsar, &c., Havniæ, 1813. Danzius, de Eusebio Cæs. Hist. Eccl. Scriptore, ejusque fide historica rectè æstimandâ, &c., Jenæ, 1815. Kestner, Commentatio de Eusebii Hist. Eccles. conditoris auctoritate et fide, &c. See also Routerdahl, de fontibus Historiæ Eccles. Eusebiana, Lond. Goth. 1826. Gibbon's inference may appear stronger than the text will warrant, yet it is difficult, after reading the passages, to dismiss all suspicion of partiality from the mind.—M.

expiate the sins of a whole life; and others again were actuated by the less honourable motive of deriving a plentiful subsistence, and perhaps a considerable profit, from the alms which the charity of the faithful bestowed on the prisoners.¹⁸¹ After the church had triumphed over all her enemies, the interest as well as vanity of the captives prompted them to magnify the merit of their respective suffering. A convenient distance of time or place gave an ample scope to the progress of fiction; and the frequent instances which might be alleged of holy martyrs whose wounds had been instantly healed, whose strength had been renewed, and whose lost members had miraculously been restored, were extremely convenient for the purpose of removing every difficulty, and of silencing every objection. The most extravagant legends, as they conduced to the honour of the church, were applauded by the credulous multitude, countenanced by the power of the clergy, and attested by the suspicious evidence of ecclesiastical history.

The vague descriptions of exile and imprisonment, of pain and torture, are so easily exaggerated or softened by the pencil of an artful orator,^a that we are naturally induced to inquire Number of martyrs. into a fact of a more distinct and stubborn kind; the number of persons who suffered death in consequence of the edicts published by Diocletian, his associates, and his successors. The recent legends record whole armies and cities which were at once swept away by the undistinguishing rage of persecution. The more ancient writers content themselves with pouring out a liberal effusion of loose and tragical invectives, without condescending to ascertain the precise number of those persons who were permitted to seal with their blood their belief of the Gospel. From the history of Eusebius it may however be collected that only nine bishops were punished with death; and we are assured, by his particular enumeration of the martyrs of Palestine, that no more than ninety-two Christians were entitled to that honourable appellation.¹⁸² As we are unacquainted with the degree of episcopal zeal and courage which prevailed at that

¹⁸¹ Augustin. Collat. Carthagin. Dei, iii. c. 13, ap. Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. v. part i. p. 46. The controversy with the Donatists has reflected some, though perhaps a partial, light on the history of the African church.

¹⁸² Eusebius de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13. He closes his narration by assuring us that these were the martyrdoms inflicted in Palestine during the whole course of the persecution. The 9th chapter of his viiith book, which relates to the province of Thebais in Egypt, may seem to contradict our moderate computation; but it will only

^a Perhaps there never was an instance of an author committing so deliberately the fault which he reprobates so strongly in others. What is the dexterous management of the more inartificial historians of Christianity, in exaggerating the numbers of the martyrs compared to the number

address with which Gibbon here quietly dismisses from the account all the horrible and excruciating tortures which fell short of death? The reader may refer to the xiith chapter (book viii.) of Eusebius for the description and for the scenes of these

time, it is not in our power to draw any useful inferences from the former of these facts: but the latter may serve to justify a very important and probable conclusion. According to the distribution of Roman provinces, Palestine may be considered as the sixteenth part of the Eastern empire: ¹⁸³ and since there were some governors who, from a real or affected clemency, had preserved their hands unstained with the blood of the faithful, ¹⁸⁴ it is reasonable to believe that the country which had given birth to Christianity produced at least the sixteenth part of the martyrs who suffered death within the dominions of Galerius and Maximin; the whole might consequently amount to about fifteen hundred, a number which, if it is equally divided between the ten years of the persecution, will allow an annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs. Allotting the same proportion to the provinces of Italy, Africa, and perhaps Spain, where, at the end of two or three years, the rigour of the penal laws was either suspended or abolished, the multitude of Christians in the Roman empire, on whom a capital punishment was inflicted by a judicial sentence, will be reduced to somewhat less than two thousand persons. Since it cannot be doubted that the Christians were more numerous, and their enemies more exasperated, in the time of Diocletian than they had ever been in any former persecution, this probable and moderate computation may teach us to estimate the number of primitive saints and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the important purpose of introducing Christianity into the world.

We shall conclude this chapter by a melancholy truth which
 Conclusion. obtrudes itself on the reluctant mind; that, even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged that the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other than

lead us to admire the artful management of the historian. Choosing for the scene of the most exquisite cruelty the most remote and sequestered country of the Roman empire, he relates that in Thebais from ten to one hundred persons had frequently suffered martyrdom in the same day. But when he proceeds to mention his own journey into Egypt, his language insensibly becomes more cautious and moderate. Instead of a large but definite number, he speaks of many Christians (*πλείους*), and most artfully selects two ambiguous words (*ιστορήσαντες* and *ὑπομειναντας*) which may signify either what he had seen or what he had heard; either the expectation or the execution of the punishment. Having thus provided a secure evasion, he commits the equivocal passage to his readers and translators; justly conceiving that their piety would induce them to prefer the most favourable sense. There was perhaps some malice in the remark of Theodorus Metochita, that all who, like Eusebius, had been conversant with the Egyptians, delighted in an obscure and intricate style. (See Valesius ad loc.)

¹⁸³ When Palestine was divided into three, the prefecture of the East contained forty-eight provinces. As the ancient distinctions of nations were long since abolished, the Romans distributed the provinces according to a general proportion of their extent and opulence.

¹⁸⁴ Ut gloriari possint nullum se innocentium peremisse, nam et ipse audiui aliquos gloriantes, quia administratio sua, in hac parte, fuerit incruenta. Lactant. Institut. Divin. v. 11.

they had experienced from the zeal of infidels. During the ages of ignorance which followed the subversion of the Roman empire in the West, the bishops of the Imperial city extended their dominion over the laity as well as clergy of the Latin church. The fabric of superstition which they had erected, and which might long have defied the feeble efforts of reason, was at length assaulted by a crowd of daring fanatics, who, from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, assumed the popular character of reformers. The church of Rome defended by violence the empire which she had acquired by fraud; a system of peace and benevolence was soon disgraced by proscriptions, wars, massacres, and the institution of the holy office. And as the reformers were animated by the love of civil as well as of religious freedom, the Catholic princes connected their own interest with that of the clergy, and enforced by fire and the sword the terrors of spiritual censures. In the Netherlands alone more than one hundred thousand of the subjects of Charles V. are said to have suffered by the hand of the executioner; and this extraordinary number is attested by Grotius,¹⁸⁵ a man of genius and learning, who preserved his moderation amidst the fury of contending sects, and who composed the annals of his own age and country at a time when the invention of printing had facilitated the means of intelligence and increased the danger of detection. If we are obliged to submit our belief to the authority of Grotius, it must be allowed that the number of Protestants who were executed in a single province and a single reign far exceeded that of the primitive martyrs in the space of three centuries and of the Roman empire. But if the improbability of the fact itself should prevail over the weight of evidence; if Grotius should be convicted of exaggerating the merit and sufferings of the reformers;¹⁸⁶ we shall be naturally led to inquire what confidence can be placed in the doubtful and imperfect monuments of ancient credulity; what degree of credit can be assigned to a courtly bishop and a passionate declaimer,^a who, under the protection of Constantine, enjoyed the exclusive privilege of recording the persecutions inflicted on the Christians by the vanquished rivals or disregarded predecessors of their gracious sovereign.

¹⁸⁵ Grot. *Annal. de Rebus Belgicis*, l. i. p. 12, edit. fol.

¹⁸⁶ Fra Paolo (*Istoria del Concilio Tridentino*, l. iii.) reduces the number of the Belgic martyrs to 50,000. In learning and moderation Fra Paolo was not inferior to Grotius. The priority of time gives some advantage to the evidence of the former, which he loses on the other hand by the distance of Venice from the Netherlands.

^a Eusebius and the author of the *Treatise de Mortibus Persecutorum*. It is deeply to be regretted that the history of this period rests so much on the loose, and, it must be admitted, by no means scrupu-

lous, authority of Eusebius. Ecclesiastical history is a solemn and melancholy lesson that the best, even the most sacred, cause will eventually suffer by the least departure from truth!—M.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOUNDATION OF CONSTANTINOPLE.—POLITICAL SYSTEM OF CONSTANTINE AND HIS SUCCESSORS.—MILITARY DISCIPLINE.—THE PALACE.—THE FINANCES.

THE unfortunate Licinius was the last rival who opposed the greatness, and the last captive who adorned the triumph, of Constantine. After a tranquil and prosperous reign the conqueror bequeathed to his family the inheritance of the Roman empire; a new capital, a new policy, and a new religion; and the innovations which he established have been embraced and consecrated by succeeding generations. The age of the great Constantine and his sons is filled with important events; but the historian must be oppressed by their number and variety, unless he diligently separates from each other the scenes which are connected only by the order of time. He will describe the political institutions that gave strength and stability to the empire before he proceeds to relate the wars and revolutions which hastened its decline. He will adopt the division unknown to the ancients of civil and ecclesiastical affairs: the victory of the Christians, and their intestine discord, will supply copious and distinct materials both for edification and for scandal.

After the defeat and abdication of Licinius his victorious rival proceeded to lay the foundations of a city destined to reign in future times the mistress of the East, and to survive the empire and religion of Constantine. The motives, whether of pride or of policy, which first induced Diocletian to withdraw himself from the ancient seat of government, had acquired additional weight by the example of his successors and the habits of forty years. Rome was insensibly confounded with the dependent kingdoms which had once acknowledged her supremacy; and the country of the Cæsars was viewed with cold indifference by a martial prince, born in the neighbourhood of the Danube, educated in the courts and armies of Asia, and invested with the purple by the legions of Britain. The Italians, who had received Constantine as their deliverer, submissively obeyed the edicts which he sometimes condescended to address to the senate and people of Rome; but they were seldom honoured with the presence of their new sovereign. During the vigour of his age Constantine, according to the various exigencies of peace and war, moved with slow dignity or with active diligence

along the frontiers of his extensive dominions; and was always prepared to take the field either against a foreign or a domestic enemy. But as he gradually reached the summit of prosperity and the decline of life, he began to meditate the design of fixing in a more permanent station the strength as well as majesty of the throne. In the choice of an advantageous situation he preferred the confines of Europe and Asia; to curb with a powerful arm the barbarians who dwelt between the Danube and the Tanais; to watch with an eye of jealousy the conduct of the Persian monarch, who indignantly supported the yoke of an ignominious treaty. With these views Diocletian had selected and embellished the residence of Nicomedia: but the memory of Diocletian was justly abhorred by the protector of the church; and Constantine was not insensible to the ambition of founding a city which might perpetuate the glory of his own name. During the late operations of the war against Licinius he had sufficient opportunity to contemplate, both as a soldier and as a statesman, the incomparable position of Byzantium; and to observe how strongly it was guarded by nature against an hostile attack, whilst it was accessible on every side to the benefits of commercial intercourse. Many ages before Constantine, one of the most judicious historians of antiquity¹ had described the advantages of a situation from whence a feeble colony of Greeks derived the command of the sea, and the honours of a flourishing and independent republic.²

Situation of
Byzantium.

If we survey Byzantium in the extent which it acquired with the august name of Constantinople, the figure of the Imperial city may be represented under that of an unequal triangle. The obtuse point, which advances towards the east and the shores of Asia, meets and repels the waves of the Thracian Bosphorus. The northern side of the city is bounded by the harbour, and the southern is washed by the Propontis or Sea of Marmara. The basis of the triangle is opposed to the west, and terminates the continent of Europe. But the admirable form and division of the circumjacent land and water cannot, without a more ample explanation, be clearly or sufficiently understood.

Description
of CONSTANTINOPLE.

¹ Polybius, l. iv. [c. 45] p. 423, edit. Casaubon. He observes that the peace of the Byzantines was frequently disturbed, and the extent of their territory contracted, by the inroads of the wild Thracians.

² The navigator Byzas, who was styled the son of Neptune, founded the city 656 [rather 667—S.] years before the Christian era. His followers were drawn from Argos and Megara. Byzantium was afterwards rebuilt and fortified by the Spartan general Pausanias. See Scaliger, *Animadvers. ad Euseb.* p. 81. Ducange, *Constantinopolis*, l. i. part i. cap. 15, 16. With regard to the wars of the Byzantines against Philip, the Gauls, and the kings of Bithynia, we should trust none but the ancient writers who lived before the greatness of the Imperial city had excited a spirit of flattery and fiction.

The winding channel through which the waters of the Euxine flow with a rapid and incessant course towards the Mediterranean received the appellation of Bosphorus, a name not less celebrated in the history than in the fables of antiquity.³ A crowd of temples and of votive altars, profusely scattered along its steep and woody banks, attested the unskilfulness, the terrors, and the devotion of the Grecian navigators who, after the example of the Argonauts, explored the dangers of the inhospitable Euxine. On these banks tradition long preserved the memory of the palace of Phineus, infested by the obscene harpies;⁴ and of the sylvan reign of Amycus, who defied the son of Leda to the combat of the Cestus.⁵ The straits of the Bosphorus are terminated by the Cyanean rocks, which, according to the description of the poets, had once floated on the face of the waters, and were destined by the gods to protect the entrance of the Euxine against the eye of profane curiosity.⁶ From the Cyanean rocks to the point and harbour of Byzantium the winding length of the Bosphorus extends about sixteen miles,⁷ and its most ordinary breadth may be computed at about one mile and a half. The *new* castles of Europe and Asia are constructed, on either continent, upon the foundations of two celebrated temples, of Serapis and of Jupiter Urius. The *old* castles, a work of the Greek emperors, command the narrowest part of the channel, in a place where the opposite banks advance within five hundred paces of each other.⁸ These fortresses were restored and strengthened by Mahomet the Second when he meditated the siege of Constantinople:⁹ but the Turkish conqueror was most probably ignorant

³ The Bosphorus has been very minutely described by Dionysius of Byzantium, who lived in the time of Domitian (Hudson, *Geograph. Minor.* tom. iii.), and by Gilles or Gyllius, a French traveller of the XVIth century. Tournefort (Lettre XV.) seems to have used his own eyes, and the learning of Gyllius. [Add Von Hammer, *Constantinopolis und der Bosporos*, 8vo.—M.]

⁴ There are very few conjectures so happy as that of Le Clerc (*Bibliothèque Universelle*, tom. i. p. 148), who supposes that the harpies were only locusts. The Syriac or Phœnician name of those insects, their noisy flight, the stench and devastation which they occasion, and the north wind which drives them into the sea, all contribute to form the striking resemblance.

⁵ The residence of Amycus was in Asia, between the old and the new castles, at a place called *Laurus Insana*. That of Phineus was in Europe, near the village of *Mauromole* and the Black Sea. See Gyllius de *Bosph.* l. ii. c. 23. Tournefort, *Lettre XV.*

⁶ The deception was occasioned by several pointed rocks, alternately covered and abandoned by the waves. At present there are two small islands, one towards either shore; that of Europe is distinguished by the column of Pompey.

⁷ The ancients computed one hundred and twenty stadia, or fifteen Roman miles. They measured only from the new castles, but they carried the straits as far as the town of Chalcedon.

⁸ Ducas. *Hist.* c. 34 [p. 136, ed. Paris; p. 108, ed. Ven.; p. 242, ed. Bonn].

⁹ The real width at the narrowest point is about 600 yards. See Chesney, *Exped. Euphrat.* vol. i. p. 326.—S.

that, near two thousand years before his reign, Darius had chosen the same situation to connect the two continents by a bridge of boats.⁹ At a small distance from the old castles we discover the little town of Chrysopolis, or Scutari, which may almost be considered as the Asiatic suburb of Constantinople. The Bosphorus, as it begins to open into the Propontis, passes between Byzantium and Chalcedon. The latter of those cities was built by the Greeks a few years before the former; and the blindness of its founders, who overlooked the superior advantages of the opposite coast, has been stigmatised by a proverbial expression of contempt.¹⁰

(The harbour of Constantinople, which may be considered as an arm of the Bosphorus, obtained, in a very remote period, the denomination of the *Golden Horn*. The curve which it describes might be compared to the horn of a stag, or as it should seem, with ~~more propriety~~, to that of an ox.¹¹ The epithet of *golden* was expressive of the riches which every wind wafted from the most distant countries into the secure and capacious port of Constantinople. The river Lycus, formed by the conflux of two little streams, pours into the harbour a perpetual supply of fresh water, which serves to cleanse the bottom and to invite the periodical shoals of fish to seek their retreat in that convenient recess. As the vicissitudes of tides are scarcely felt in those seas, the constant depth of the harbour allows goods to be landed on the quays without the assistance of boats; and it has been observed that, in many places, the largest vessels may rest their prows against the houses while their sterns are floating in the water.¹² From the mouth of the Lycus to that of the harbour this arm of the Bosphorus is more than seven miles in length. The entrance is about five hundred yards broad, and a strong chain could be occasionally drawn across it to guard the port and city from the attack of an hostile navy.¹³

Leunclavius Hist. Turcica Mussulmanica, l. xv. p. 577. Under the Greek empire these castles were used as state prisons, under the tremendous name of Lethe, or towers of oblivion.

⁹ Darius engraved in Greek and Assyrian letters, on two marble columns, the names of his subject nations, and the amazing numbers of his land and sea forces. The Byzantines afterwards transported these columns into the city, and used them for the altars of their tutelar deities. Herodotus, l. iv. c. 87.

¹⁰ Namque arctissimo inter Europam Asiamque divortio Byzantium in extrema Europâ posuere Græci, quibus, Pythium Apollinem consulentibus ubi conderent urbem, redditum oraculum est, quærerent sedem *cacorum* terris adversam. Eâ ambage Chalcedonii monstrabantur, quod priores illuc advecti, prævisâ locorum utilitate pejora legissent. Tacit. Annal. xii. 63.

¹¹ Strabo, l. vii. p. 492 [320, ed. Casaubon]. Most of the antlers are now broken off; or, to speak less figuratively, most of the recesses of the harbour are filled up, See Gyllius de Bosphoro Thracio, l. i. c. 5.

¹² Procopius de Edificiis, l. i. c. 5. His description is confirmed by modern travellers. See Thevenot, part i. l. i. c. 15. Tournefort, Lettre XII. Niebuhr, Voyage d'Arabie, p. 22.

¹³ See Ducange, C. P. l. i. part i. c. 16, and his Observations sur Villehardouin,

Between the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, the shores of Europe and Asia receding on either side enclose the Sea of ^{The} Propontis. ^{Propontis.} mara, which was known to the ancients by the denomination of Propontis. The navigation from the issue of the Bosphorus to the entrance of the Hellespont is about one hundred and twenty miles. Those who steer their westward course through the middle of the Propontis may at once descry the high lands of Thrace and Bithynia, and never lose sight of the lofty summit of Mount Olympus, covered with eternal snows.¹⁴ They leave on the left a deep gulf, at the bottom of which Nicomedia was seated, the imperial residence of Diocletian; and they pass the small islands of Cyzicus and Proconnesus before they cast anchor at Gallipoli, where the sea, which separates Asia from Europe, is again contracted into a narrow channel.

The geographers who, with the most skilful accuracy, have surveyed the form and extent of the Hellespont, assign about ^{The} Hellespont. sixty miles for the winding course, and about three miles for the ordinary breadth, of those celebrated straits.¹⁵ But the narrowest part of the channel is found to the northward of the old Turkish castles, between the cities of Sestus and Abydus. It was here that the adventurous Leander braved the passage of the flood for the possession of his mistress.¹⁶ It was here likewise, in a place where the distance between the opposite banks cannot exceed five hundred paces, that Xerxes imposed a stupendous bridge of boats, for the purpose of transporting into Europe a hundred and seventy myriads of barbarians.¹⁷ A sea contracted within such narrow limits

p. 289. The chain was drawn from the Acropolis near the modern Kiosk to the tower of Galata, and was supported at convenient distances by large wooden piles.

¹⁴ Thevenot (*Voyages au Levant*, part i. l. i. c. 14) contracts the measure to 125 small Greek miles. Belon (*Observations*, l. ii. c. 1) gives a good description of the Propontis, but contents himself with the vague expression of one day and one night's sail. When Sandys (*Travels*, p. 21) talks of 150 furlongs in length as well as breadth, we can only suppose some mistake of the press in the text of that judicious traveller.

¹⁵ See an admirable dissertation of M. d'Anville upon the Hellespont or Dardanelles, in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxviii. p. 318-346. Yet even that ingenious geographer is too fond of supposing now, and perhaps imaginary measures, for the purpose of rendering ancient writers as accurate as himself. The stadia employed by Herodotus in the description of the Euxine, the Bosphorus, &c. (l. iv. c. 85), must undoubtedly be all of the same species; but it seems impossible to reconcile them either with truth or with each other.

¹⁶ The oblique distance between Sestus and Abydus was thirty stadia. The improbable tale of Hero and Leander is exposed by M. Mahudel, but is defended on the authority of poets and medals by M. de la Nauze. See the *Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. vii. *Hist.* p. 74, *Mem.* p. 240.^a

¹⁷ See the seventh book of Herodotus, who has erected an elegant trophy to his own fame and to that of his country. The review appears to have been made with tolerable

* The practical illustration of the possibility of Leander's feat by Lord Byron and other English swimmers is too well known to need particular reference. —M.

may seem but ill to deserve the singular epithet of *broad*, which Homer, as well as Orpheus, has frequently bestowed on the Hellespont.^a But our ideas of greatness are of a relative nature: the traveller, and especially the poet, who sailed along the Hellespont, who pursued the windings of the stream, and contemplated the rural scenery, which appeared on every side to terminate the prospect, insensibly lost the remembrance of the sea; and his fancy painted those celebrated straits with all the attributes of a mighty river, flowing with a swift current, in the midst of a woody and inland country, and at length, through a wide mouth, discharging itself into the *Ægean* or *Archipelago*.¹⁸ Ancient Troy,¹⁹ seated on an eminence at the foot of Mount Ida, overlooked the mouth of the Hellespont, which scarcely received an accession of waters from the tribute of those immortal rivulets the Simois and Scamander. The Grecian camp had stretched twelve miles along the shore, from the Sigeon to the Rhœtean promontory; and the flanks of the army were guarded by the bravest chiefs who fought under the banners of Agamemnon. The first of those promontories was occupied by Achilles with his invincible myrmidons, and the dauntless Ajax pitched his tents on the other. After Ajax had fallen a sacrifice to his disappointed pride and to the ingratitude of the Greeks, his sepulchre was erected on the ground where he had defended the navy against the rage of Jove and of Hector; and the citizens of the rising town of Rhœteum

accuracy; but the vanity, first of the Persians, and afterwards of the Greeks, was interested to magnify the armament and the victory. I should much doubt whether the invaders have ever outnumbered the *men* of any country which they attacked.

¹⁸ See Wood's *Observations* on Homer, p. 320. I have, with pleasure, selected this remark from an author who in general seems to have disappointed the expectation of the public as a critic, and still more as a traveller. He had visited the banks of the Hellespont; he had read Strabo; he ought to have consulted the Roman itineraries. How was it possible for him to confound Ilium and Alexandria Troas (*Observations*, p. 340, 341), two cities which were sixteen miles distant from each other? ^b

¹⁹ Demetrius of Scepsis wrote sixty books on thirty lines of Homer's catalogue. The xliith Book of Strabo is sufficient for our curiosity.

* Gibbon does not allow greater width between the two nearest points of the shores of the Hellespont than between those of the Bosphorus; yet all the ancient writers speak of the Hellespontic strait as broader than the other: they agree in giving it seven stadia in its narrowest width (Herod. iv. c. 85; vii. c. 34; Strabo, p. 591; Plin. iv. c. 12), which make 875 paces. It is singular that Gibbon, who in the fifteenth note of this chapter reproaches d'Anville with being fond of supposing new and perhaps imaginary measures, has here adopted the peculiar measurement which d'Anville has assigned to the stadium. This great geographer

believes that the ancients had a stadium of fifty-one toises, and it is that which he applies to the walls of Babylon. Now seven of these stadia are equal to about 500 paces: 7 stadia = 2142 feet; 500 paces = 2135 feet 5 inches.—G. See Rennell, *Geog. of Herod.* p. 121; Ukert, *Geographie der Griechen und Römer*, vol. i. p. 2, 71.—M.

^b Compare Walpole's *Memoirs* on Turkey, v. i. p. 101. Dr. Clarke adopted Mr. Walpole's interpretation of *πλάτυς* 'Ελλάς-σποντος, the salt Hellespont. But the old interpretation is more graphic and Homeric. Clarke's *Travels*, ii. 70.—M

celebrated his memory with divine honours.²⁰ Before Constantine gave a just preference to the situation of Byzantium, he had conceived the design of erecting the seat of empire on this celebrated spot, from whence the Romans derived their fabulous origin. The extensive plain which lies below ancient Troy, towards the Rhœtean promontory and the tomb of Ajax, was first chosen for his new capital; and, though the undertaking was soon relinquished, the stately remains of unfinished walls and towers attracted the notice of all who sailed through the straits of the Hellespont.²¹

We are at present qualified to view the advantageous position of Constantinople, which appears to have been formed by nature for the centre and capital of a great monarchy.

Advantages
of Constantinople.

Situated in the forty-first degree of latitude, the Imperial city commanded, from her seven hills,²² the opposite shores of Europe and Asia; the climate was healthy and temperate, the soil fertile, the harbour secure and capacious, and the approach on the side of the continent was of small extent and easy defence. The Bosphorus and the Hellespont may be considered as the two gates of Constantinople, and the prince who possessed those important passages could always shut them against a naval enemy and open them to the fleets of commerce. The preservation of the eastern provinces may, in some degree, be ascribed to the policy of Constantine, as the barbarians of the Euxine, who in the preceding age had poured their armaments into the heart of the Mediterranean, soon desisted from the exercise of piracy, and despaired of forcing this insurmountable barrier. When the gates of the Hellespont and Bosphorus were shut, the capital still enjoyed within their spacious enclosure every production which could supply the wants or gratify the luxury of its numerous inhabitants. The sea-coasts of Thrace and Bithynia, which languish under the weight of Turkish oppression, still exhibit a rich prospect of vineyards, of gardens, and of plentiful harvests; and the Propontis has ever been renowned for an inexhaustible store of the most exquisite fish, that are taken in their stated seasons,

²⁰ Strabo, l. xiii. p. 595. The disposition of the ships, which were drawn up on dry land, and the posts of Ajax and Achilles, are very clearly described by Homer. See *Iliad*, vii. 220.

²¹ Zosim. l. ii. [c. 30] p. 105. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 3. Theophanes, p. 18 [p. 14, ed. Ven.; vol. i. p. 34, ed. Bonn]. Nicephorus Callistus, l. vii. p. 48. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. [c. 3] p. 6. Zosimus places the new city between Ilium and Alexandria, but this apparent difference may be reconciled by the large extent of its circumference. Before the foundation of Constantinople, Thessalonica is mentioned by Cedrenus (p. 283) [vol. i. p. 496, ed. Bonn], and Sardica by Zonaras, as the intended capital. They both suppose, with very little probability, that the emperor, if he had not been prevented by a prodigy, would have repeated the mistake of the blind Chaldeans.

²² Pocock's Description of the East, vol. ii. part ii. p. 127. His plan of the seven hills is clear and accurate. That traveller is seldom so satisfactory.

without skill, and almost without labour.²³ But when the passages of the straits were thrown open for trade, they alternately admitted the natural and artificial riches of the north and south, of the Euxine, and of the Mediterranean. Whatever rude commodities were collected in the forests of Germany and Scythia, as far as the sources of the Tanais and the Borysthenes; whatsoever was manufactured by the skill of Europe or Asia; the corn of Egypt, and the gems and spices of the farthest India, were brought by the varying winds into the port of Constantinople, which, for many ages, attracted the commerce of the ancient world.²⁴

(The prospect of beauty, of safety, and of wealth, united in a single spot, was sufficient to justify the choice of Con-
stantine. But as some decent mixture of prodigy and Foundation of the city.
fable has, in every age, been supposed to reflect a becoming majesty on the origin of great cities,²⁵ the emperor was desirous of ascribing his resolution not so much to the uncertain counsels of human policy as to the infallible and eternal decrees of divine wisdom. In one of his laws he has been careful to instruct posterity that, in obedience to the commands of God, he laid the everlasting foundations of Constantinople;²⁶ and though he has not condescended to relate in what manner the celestial inspiration was communicated to his mind, the defect of his modest silence has been liberally supplied by the ingenuity of succeeding writers, who describe the nocturnal vision which appeared to the fancy of Constantine as he slept within the walls of Byzantium. The tutelar genius of the city, a venerable matron sinking under the weight of years and infirmities, was suddenly transformed into a blooming maid, whom his own hands adorned with all the symbols of Imperial greatness.²⁷ The monarch awoke, interpreted the auspicious omen, and obeyed, without hesitation, the will of Heaven. The day which gave birth to a city or colony was celebrated by the Romans with such ceremonies as had

²³ See Belon, *Observations*, c. 72-76. Among a variety of different species, the Pelamides, a sort of thunnies, were the most celebrated. We may learn from Polybius, Strabo, and Tacitus, that the profits of the fishery constituted the principal revenue of Byzantium.

²⁴ See the eloquent description of Busbequius, *epistol.* i. p. 64. *Est in Europa; habet in conspectu Asiam, Egyptum, Africamque à dextrâ: quæ tametsi contiguæ non sunt, maris tamen navigandique commoditate veluti junguntur. A sinistrâ vero Pontus est Euxinus, &c.*

²⁵ *Datur hæc venia antiquitati, ut miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat.* T. Liv. in *procem.*

²⁶ He says, in one of his laws, *pro commoditate Urbis quam æterno nomine, jubente Deo, donavimus.* Cod. Theodos. l. xiii. tit. v. leg. 7.

²⁷ The Greeks, Theophanes, Cedrenus, and the author of the *Alexandrian Chronicle*, confine themselves to vague and general expressions. For a more particular account of the vision we are obliged to have recourse to such Latin writers as William of Malmesbury. See Ducange, C. P. l. i. p. 24, 25.

been ordained by a generous superstition;²⁸ and though Constantine might omit some rites which savoured too strongly of their Pagan origin, yet he was anxious to leave a deep impression of hope and respect on the minds of the spectators. On foot, with a lance in his hand, the emperor himself led the solemn procession, and directed the line which was traced as the boundary of the destined capital, till the growing circumference was observed with astonishment by the assistants, who, at length, ventured to observe that he had already exceeded the most ample measure of a great city. "I shall still advance," replied Constantine, "till I see, the invisible guide who marches before me, thinks proper to stop."²⁹ Without presuming to investigate the nature or motives of this extraordinary conductor, we shall content ourselves with the more humble task of describing the extent and limits of Constantinople.³⁰

In the actual state of the city, the palace and gardens of the Seraglio occupy the eastern promontory, the first of the
 Extent. seven hills, and cover about one hundred and fifty acres of our own measure. The seat of Turkish jealousy and despotism is erected on the foundations of a Grecian republic; but it may be supposed that the Byzantines were tempted by the conveniency of the harbour to extend their habitations on that side beyond the modern limits of the Seraglio. The new walls of Constantine stretched from the port to the Propontis across the enlarged breadth of the triangle, at the distance of fifteen stadia from the ancient fortification, and with the city of Byzantium they enclosed five of the seven hills which, to the eyes of those who approach Constantinople, appear to rise above each other in beautiful order.³¹ About a century after the death of the founder, the new buildings, extending on one side up the harbour, and on the other along the Propontis, already covered the narrow ridge of the sixth and the broad summit of the seventh hill. The necessity of protecting those suburbs from the incessant

²⁸ See Plutarch in Romul. [c. 11] tom. i. p. 49, edit. Bryan. Among other ceremonies, a large hole, which had been dug for that purpose, was filled up with handfuls of earth, which each of the settlers brought from the place of his birth, and thus adopted his new country.

²⁹ Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 9. This incident, though borrowed from a suspected writer, is characteristic and probable.

³⁰ See in the Mémoires de l'Académie, tom. xxxv. p. 747-758, a dissertation of M. d'Anville on the extent of Constantinople. He takes the plan inserted in the Imperium Orientale of Banduri as the most complete; but by a series of very nice observations he reduces the extravagant proportion of the scale, and, instead of 9500, determines the circumference of the city as consisting of about 7800 French *toises*.

³¹ Codinus, Antiquitat. Const. p. 12 [p. 25, ed. Bonn]. He assigns the church of St. Anthony as the boundary on the side of the harbour. It is mentioned in Dugange, l. iv. c. 6; but I have tried, without success, to discover the exact place where it was situated.

inroads of the barbarians engaged the younger Theodosius to surround his capital with an adequate and permanent enclosure of walls.³² From the eastern promontory to the golden gate, the extreme length of Constantinople was about three Roman miles,³³ the circumference measured between ten and eleven, and the surface might be computed as equal to about two thousand English acres. It is impossible to justify the vain and credulous exaggerations of modern travellers, who have sometimes stretched the limits of Constantinople over the adjacent villages of the European and even of the Asiatic coast.³⁴ But the suburbs of Pera and Galata, though situate beyond the harbour, may deserve to be considered as a part of the city;³⁵ and this addition may perhaps authorise the measure of a Byzantine historian, who assigns sixteen Greek (about fourteen Roman) miles for the circumference of his native city.³⁶ Such an extent may seem not unworthy of an Imperial residence. Yet Constantinople must yield to Babylon and Thebes,³⁷ to ancient Rome, to London, and even to Paris.³⁸

The master of the Roman world, who aspired to erect an eternal monument of the glories of his reign, could employ in the prosecution of that great work the wealth, the labour, and all that yet remained of the genius, of obedient millions. Some estimate may be formed of the expense bestowed with Imperial liberality on the foundation of Constantinople by the allowance or

Progress
of the work.

³² The new wall of Theodosius was constructed in the year 413. In 447 it was thrown down by an earthquake, and rebuilt in three months by the diligence of the præfect Cyrus. The suburb of the Blachernæ was first taken into the city in the reign of Heraclius. Ducange, *Const.* l. i. c. 10, 11.

³³ The measurement is expressed in the *Notitia* by 14,075 feet. It is reasonable to suppose that these were Greek feet; the proportion of which has been ingeniously determined by M. d'Anville. He compares the 180 feet with 78 Hashemite cubits, which in different writers are assigned for the heights of St. Sophia. Each of these cubits was equal to 27 French inches.

³⁴ The accurate Thevenot (l. i. c. 15) walked in one hour and three-quarters round two of the sides of the triangle, from the Kiosk of the Seraglio to the seven towers. D'Anville examines with care, and receives with confidence, this decisive testimony, which gives a circumference of ten or twelve miles. The extravagant computation of Tournefort (*Lettre XI.*) of thirty-four or thirty miles, without including Scutari, is a strange departure from his usual character.

³⁵ The *sycæ*, or fig-trees, formed the thirteenth region, and were very much embellished by Justinian. It has since borne the names of Pera and Galata. The etymology of the former is obvious; that of the latter is unknown. See Ducange, *Const.* l. i. c. 22, and Gyllius de Byzant. l. iv. c. 10.

³⁶ One hundred and eleven stadia, which may be translated into modern Greek miles each of seven stadia, or 660, sometimes only 600, French toises. See d'Anville, *Mesures Itinéraires*, p. 53.

³⁷ When the ancient texts, which describe the size of Babylon and Thebes, are settled, the exaggerations reduced, and the measures ascertained, we find that those famous cities filled the great but not incredible circumference of about twenty-five or thirty miles. Compare d'Anville, *Mém. de l'Académie*, tom. xxviii. p. 235, with his *Description de l'Égypte*, p. 201, 202.

³⁸ If we divide Constantinople and Paris into equal squares of 50 French toises, the former contains 850, and the latter 1160, of those divisions.

about two millions five hundred thousand pounds for the construction of the walls, the porticoes, and the aqueducts.³⁹ The forests that overshadowed the shores of the Euxine, and the celebrated quarries of white marble in the little island of Proconnesus, supplied an inexhaustible stock of materials, ready to be conveyed, by the convenience of a short water-carriage, to the harbour of Byzantium.⁴⁰ A multitude of labourers and artificers urged the conclusion of the work with incessant toil; but the impatience of Constantine soon discovered that, in the decline of the arts, the skill as well as numbers of his architects bore a very unequal proportion to the greatness of his designs. The magistrates of the most distant provinces were therefore directed to institute schools, to appoint professors, and, by the hopes of rewards and privileges, to engage in the study and practice of architecture a sufficient number of ingenious youths who had received a liberal education.⁴¹ The buildings of the new city were executed by such artificers as the reign of Constantine could afford; but they were decorated by the hands of the most celebrated masters of the age of Pericles and Alexander. To revive the genius of Phidias and Lysippus surpassed indeed the power of a Roman emperor; but the immortal productions which they had bequeathed to posterity were exposed without defence to the rapacious vanity of a despot. By his commands the cities of Greece and Asia were despoiled of their most valuable ornaments.⁴² The trophies of memorable wars, the objects of religious veneration, the most finished statues of the gods and heroes, of the sages and poets of ancient times, contributed to the splendid triumph of Constantinople; and gave occasion to the remark of the historian Cedrenus,⁴³ who observes, with some enthusiasm, that nothing seemed wanting except the souls of the illustrious men whom those admirable monuments were intended to represent. But it is not in the city of Constantine, nor

³⁹ Six hundred centenaries, or sixty thousand pounds' weight of gold. This sum is taken from Codinus, *Antiquit. Const.* p. 11 [p. 23, ed. Bonn]; but unless that contemptible author had derived his information from some purer sources, he would probably have been unacquainted with so obsolete a mode of reckoning.

⁴⁰ For the forests of the Black Sea, consult Tournefort, *Lettre XVI.*; for the marble quarries of Proconnesus, see Strabo, l. xiii. p. 588. The latter had already furnished the materials of the stately buildings of Cyzicus.

⁴¹ See the *Codex Theodos.* l. xiii. tit. iv. leg. 1. This law is dated in the year 334, and was addressed to the præfect of Italy, whose jurisdiction extended over Africa. The commentary of Godefroy on the whole title well deserves to be consulted.

⁴² *Constantinopolis dedicatur pœne omnium urbium nuditate.* Hieronym. *Chron.* p. 181. See Codinus, p. 8, 9 [p. 16 *sqq.* ed. Bonn]. The author of the *Antiquitat. Const.* l. iii. (apud Banduri *Imp. Orient.* tom. i. p. 41) enumerates Rome, Sicily, Antioch, Athens, and a long list of other cities. The provinces of Greece and Asia Minor may be supposed to have yielded the richest booty.

⁴³ *Hist. Compend.* p. 369 [vol. i. p. 648, ed. Bonn]. He describes the statue, or rather bust, of Homer with a degree of taste which plainly indicates that Cedrenus copied the style of a more fortunate age.

in the declining period of an empire, when the human mind was depressed by civil and religious slavery, that we should seek for the souls of Homer and of Demosthenes.

During the siege of Byzantium the conqueror had pitched his tent on the commanding eminence of the second hill. To perpetuate the memory of his success, he chose the same advantageous position for the principal Forum,⁴⁴ which appears to have been of a circular, or rather elliptical form. The two opposite entrances formed triumphal arches; the porticoes, which enclosed it on every side, were filled with statues, and the centre of the Forum was occupied by a lofty column, of which a mutilated fragment is now degraded by the appellation of the *burnt pillar*. This column was erected on a pedestal of white marble twenty feet high, and was composed of ten pieces of porphyry, each of which measured about ten feet in height, and about thirty-three in circumference.⁴⁵ On the summit of the pillar, above one hundred and twenty feet from the ground, stood the colossal statue of Apollo. It was of bronze, had been transported either from Athens or from a town of Phrygia, and was supposed to be the work of Phidias. The artist had represented the god of day, or, as it was afterwards interpreted, the emperor Constantine himself, with a sceptre in his right hand, the globe of the world in his left, and a crown of rays glittering on his head.⁴⁶ The Circus, or Hippodrome, was a stately building about four hundred paces in length, and one hundred in breadth.⁴⁷ The space between the two *metæ* or goals was filled with statues and obelisks; and we may still remark a very singular fragment of antiquity, the bodies of three serpents twisted into one pillar of brass. Their triple

Edifices.

⁴⁴ Zosim. l. ii. [c. 30] p. 106. Chron. Alexandrin. vel Paschal. p. 284. Ducange, Const. l. i. c. 24. Even the last of those writers seems to confound the Forum of Constantine with the Augusteum, or court of the palace. I am not satisfied whether I have properly distinguished what belongs to the one and the other.

⁴⁵ The most tolerable account of this column is given by Pocock, Description of the East, vol. ii. part ii. p. 131. But it is still in many instances perplexed and unsatisfactory.

⁴⁶ Ducange, Const. l. i. c. 24, p. 76, and his notes ad Alexiad. p. 382. The statue of Constantine or Apollo was thrown down under the reign of Alexius Comnenus.*

⁴⁷ Tournefort (Lettre XII.) computes the Atmeidan at four hundred paces. If he means geometrical paces of five feet each, it was three hundred *toises* in length, about forty more than the great circus of Rome. See d'Anville, Mesures Itinéraires, p. 73.

* On this column (says M. von Hammer), Constantine, with singular shamelessness, placed his own statue with the attributes of Apollo and Christ. He substituted the nails of the Passion for the rays of the sun. Such is the direct testimony of the author of the Antiquit. Constantinop. apud Banduri. Constantine was replaced by the "great and religious"

Julian; Julian, by Theodosius. A.D. 1412, the key-stone was loosened by an earthquake. The statue fell in the reign of Alexius Comnenus, and was replaced by the cross. The Palladium was said to be buried under the pillar. Von Hammer, Constantinopolis und der Bosphoros : '62.—M.

heads had once supported the golden tripod which, after the defeat of Xerxes, was consecrated in the temple of Delphi by the victorious Greeks.⁴⁸ The beauty of the Hippodrome has been long since defaced by the rude hands of the Turkish conquerors,^b but, under the similar appellation of Atmeidan, it still serves as a place of exercise for their horses. From the throne, whence the emperor viewed the Circensian games, a winding staircase⁴⁹ descended to the palace; a magnificent edifice, which scarcely yielded to the residence of Rome itself, and which, together with the dependent courts, gardens, and porticoes, covered a considerable extent of ground upon the banks of the Propontis, between the Hippodrome and the church of St. Sophia.⁵⁰ We might likewise celebrate the baths, which still retained the name of Zeuxippus, after they had been enriched, by the munificence of Constantine, with lofty columns, various marbles, and above threescore statues of bronze.⁵¹ But we should deviate from the design of this history if we attempted minutely to describe the different buildings or quarters of the city. It may be sufficient

⁴⁸ The guardians of the most holy relics would rejoice if they were able to produce such a chain of evidence as may be alleged on this occasion. See Banduri ad Antiquitat. Const. p. 688. Gyllius de Byzant. l. ii. c. 13. 1. The original consecration of the tripod and pillar in the temple of Delphi may be proved from Herodotus and Pausanias. 2. The Pagan Zosimus agrees with the three ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius, Socrates, and Sozomen, that the sacred ornaments of the temple of Delphi were removed to Constantinople by the order of Constantine; and among these the serpentine pillar of the Hippodrome is particularly mentioned. 3. All the European travellers who have visited Constantinople, from Buondelmonte to Pocock, describe it in the same place, and almost in the same manner; the differences between them are occasioned only by the injuries which it has sustained from the Turks. Mahomet the Second broke the under jaw of one of the serpents with a stroke of his battle-axe. Thevenot, l. i. c. 17.^a

⁴⁹ The Latin name *Cochlea* was adopted by the Greeks, and very frequently occurs in the Byzantine history. Ducange, Const. l. ii. c. 1, p. 104.

⁵⁰ There are three topographical points which indicate the situation of the palace. 1. The staircase which connected it with the Hippodrome or Atmeidan. 2. A small artificial port on the Propontis, from whence there was an easy ascent, by a flight of marble steps, to the gardens of the palace. 3. The Augusteum was a spacious court, one side of which was occupied by the front of the palace, and another by the church of St. Sophia.

⁵¹ Zeuxippus was an epithet of Jupiter, and the baths were a part of old Byzantium. The difficulty of assigning their true situation has not been felt by Ducange. History seems to connect them with St. Sophia and the palace; but the original plan inserted in Banduri places them on the other side of the city, near the harbour. For their beauties see Chron. Paschal, p. 285, and Gyllius de Byzant. l. ii. c. 7. Christodorus (see Antiquitat. Const. l. vii.) composed inscriptions in verse for each of the statues. He was a Theban poet in genius as well as in birth:—

Bœotum in crasso jurares aëre natum.^c

^a See note 75, ch. lxxviii., for Dr. Clarke's rejection of Thevenot's authority. Von Hammer, however, repeats the story of Thevenot without questioning its authenticity.—M.

^b In 1808 the Janissaries revolted against the vizier Mustapha Baisactar, who wished to introduce a new system of military

organisation, besieged the quarter of the Hippodrome, in which stood the palace of the viziers, and the Hippodrome was consumed in the conflagration.—G.

^c Yet, for his age, the description of the statues of Hecuba and of Homer is by no means without merit. See Antholog. Palat. (edit. Jacobs) i. 37.—M.

to observe that whatever could adorn the dignity of a great capital, or contribute to the benefit or pleasure of its numerous inhabitants, was contained within the walls of Constantinople. A particular description, composed about a century after its foundation, enumerates a capitol or school of learning, a circus, two theatres, eight public and one hundred and fifty-three private baths, fifty-two porticoes, five granaries, eight aqueducts or reservoirs of water, four spacious halls for the meetings of the senate or courts of justice, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and four thousand three hundred and eighty-eight houses which, for their size or beauty, deserved to be distinguished from the multitude of plebeian habitations.⁵²

The populousness of his favoured city was the next and most serious object of the attention of its founder. In the dark ages which succeeded the translation of the empire, the ^{Population.} remote and the immediate consequences of that memorable event were strangely confounded by the vanity of the Greeks and the credulity of the Latins.⁵³ It was asserted and believed that all the noble families of Rome, the senate, and the equestrian order, with their innumerable attendants, had followed their emperor to the banks of the Propontis; that a spurious race of strangers and plebeians was left to possess the solitude of the ancient capital; and that the lands of Italy, long since converted into gardens, were at once deprived of cultivation and inhabitants.⁵⁴ In the course of this history such exaggerations will be reduced to their just value; yet, since the growth of Constantinople cannot be ascribed to the general increase of mankind and of industry, it must be admitted that this artificial colony was raised at the expense of the ancient cities of the empire. Many opulent senators of Rome and of the eastern provinces were probably invited by Constantine to adopt for their country the fortunate spot which he had chosen for his own residence. The invitations of a master are scarcely to be distinguished from commands, and the liberality of the emperor obtained a ready and cheerful obedience. He bestowed on his favourites the palaces

⁵² See the Notitia. Rome only reckoned 1780 large houses, *domus*; but the word must have had a more dignified signification. No *insulae* are mentioned at Constantinople. The old capital consisted of 424 streets, the new of 322.

⁵³ Liutprand Legatio ad Imp. Nicephorum, p. 153. The modern Greeks have strangely disfigured the antiquities of Constantinople. We might excuse the errors of the Turkish or Arabian writers; but it is somewhat astonishing that the Greeks, who had access to the authentic materials preserved in their own language, should prefer fiction to truth, and loose tradition to genuine history. In a single page of Codinus we may detect twelve unpardonable mistakes: the reconciliation of Severus and Niger, the marriage of their son and daughter, the siege of Byzantium by the Macedonians, the invasion of the Gauls which recalled Severus to Rome, the sixty years which elapsed from his death to the foundation of Constantinople, &c.

⁵⁴ Montesquieu, Grandeur et Décadence des Romains, c. 17.

which he had built in the several quarters of the city, assigned them lands and pensions for the support of their dignity,⁵⁵ and alienated the demesnes of Pontus and Asia to grant hereditary estates by the easy tenure of maintaining a house in the capital.⁵⁶ But these encouragements and obligations soon became superfluous, and were gradually abolished. Wherever the seat of government is fixed, a considerable part of the public revenue will be expended by the prince himself, by his ministers, by the officers of justice, and by the domestics of the palace. The most wealthy of the provincials will be attracted by the powerful motives of interest and duty, of amusement and curiosity. A third and more numerous class of inhabitants will insensibly be formed, of servants, of artificers, and of merchants, who derive their subsistence from their own labour, and from the wants or luxury of the superior ranks. In less than a century Constantinople disputed with Rome itself the pre-eminence of riches and numbers. New piles of buildings, crowded together with too little regard to health or convenience, scarcely allowed the intervals of narrow streets for the perpetual throng of men, of horses, and of carriages. The allotted space of ground was insufficient to contain the increasing people, and the additional foundations, which on either side were advanced into the sea, might alone have composed a very considerable city.⁵⁷

The frequent and regular distributions of wine and oil, of corn or bread, of money or provisions, had almost exempted the poorer citizens of Rome from the necessity of labour. The magnificence of the first Cæsars was in some measure imitated by the founder of Constantinople:⁵⁸ but his liberality, however it might

⁵⁵ Themist. Orat. iii. p. 48, edit. Hardouin. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 3. Zosim. l. ii. [c. 31] p. 107. Anonym. Valesian. p. 715. If we could credit Codinus (p. 10) [p. 20, sq., ed. Bonn], Constantine built houses for the senators on the exact model of their Roman palaces, and gratified them, as well as himself, with the pleasure of an agreeable surprise; but the whole story is full of fictions and inconsistencies.

⁵⁶ The law by which the younger Theodosius, in the year 438, abolished this tenure, may be found among the Novellæ of that emperor at the end of the Theodosian Code, tom. vi. nov. 12. M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 371) has evidently mistaken the nature of these estates. With a grant from the Imperial demesnes, the same condition was accepted as a favour, which would justly have been deemed a hardship if it had been imposed upon private property.

⁵⁷ The passages of Zosimus, of Eunapius, of Sozomen, and of Agathias, which relate to the increase of buildings and inhabitants at Constantinople, are collected and connected by Gyllius de Byzant. l. i. c. 3. Sidonius Apollinaris (in Panegy. Anthem. 56, p. 279, edit. Sirmond) describes the moles that were pushed forwards into the sea; they consisted of the famous Puzzolan sand, which hardens in the water.

⁵⁸ Sozomen, l. ii. c. 3. Philostorg. l. ii. c. 9. Codin. Antiquitat. Const. p. 8 [p. 16, ed. Bonn]. It appears by Socrates, l. ii. c. 13, that the daily allowance of the city consisted of eight myriads of σίτου, which we may either translate, with Valesius, by the words modii of corn, or consider as expressive of the number of loaves of bread.^a

^a Naudet supposes that 80,000 medimni would be more likely to mean the Greek of corn were intended, as a Greek writer measure medimnus than the Roman

excite the applause of the people, has incurred the censure of posterity. A nation of legislators and conquerors might assert their claim to the harvests of Africa, which had been purchased with their blood; and it was artfully contrived by Augustus, that, in the enjoyment of plenty, the Romans should lose the memory of freedom. But the prodigality of Constantine could not be excused by any consideration either of public or private interest; and the annual tribute of corn imposed upon Egypt for the benefit of his new capital was applied to feed a lazy and insolent populace, at the expense of the husbandmen of an industrious province.⁵⁹ Some other regulations of this emperor are less liable to blame, but they are less deserving of notice. He divided Constantinople into fourteen regions or quarters,⁶⁰ dignified the public council with the appellation of senate,⁶¹ communicated to the citizens the privileges of Italy,⁶² and bestowed on the rising city

⁵⁹ See Cod. Theodes. l. xiii. and xiv. and Cod. Justinian. Edict. xii. tom. ii. p. 648, edit. Genev. See the beautiful complaint of Rome in the poem of Claudian de Bell. Gildonico, ver. 60-62:—

Cum subiit par Roma mihi, divisaque sumsit
Æquales Aurora togas; Ægyptia rura
In partem cessere novam.

⁶⁰ The regions of Constantinople are mentioned in the Code of Justinian, and particularly described in the Notitia of the younger Theodosius; but as the four last of them are not included within the wall of Constantine, it may be doubted whether this division of the city should be referred to the founder.

⁶¹ *Senatum constituit secundi ordinis; Claros vocavit.* Anonym. Valesian. p. 715. The senators of old Rome were styled *Clarissimi*. See a curious note of Valesius ad Ammian. Marcellin. xxii. 9. From the eleventh epistle of Julian it should seem that the place of senator was considered as a burthen rather than as an honour; but the Abbé de la Bléterie (Vie de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 371) has shown that this epistle could not relate to Constantinople. Might we not read, instead of the celebrated name of *Βουζαρίαν*, the obscure but more probable word *Βισανθίαν*? Bisanthe or Rhœdestus, now Rhodosto, was a small maritime city of Thrace. See Stephan. Byz. de Urbibus, p. 225 [ed. Lugd. B. 1694], and Cellar. Geograph. tom. i. p. 849.

⁶² Cod. Theodos. l. xiv. 13. [Add Cod. Just. xi. 20.—S.] The commentary of Godefroy (tom. v. p. 220) is long, but perplexed; nor indeed is it easy to ascertain in what the *Jus Italicum* could consist after the freedom of the city had been communicated to the whole empire.*

measure modius; and his opinion has been adopted by Mr. Finlay. (Naudet, des Secours publics chez les Romains, in the Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, vol. xiii. p. 48; Finlay, Greece under the Romans, p. 136.) But Socrates says that the daily allowance of the city was 80,000 *ἀίνας*, and it is impossible to believe that 80,000 medimni were daily distributed at Constantinople.* Indeed, the smaller quantity of 80,000 modii appears incredible; and it is therefore more probable that 80,000 loaves of bread were intended. This is expressly stated by the author of the Life of Paul, Bishop of Constantinople (Phot. Bibl. No. 257, p. 475, a, ed. Bekker); and it is confirmed by the fact that from the time of Aurelian,

and even earlier, bread was daily distributed to the people at Rome, instead of corn every month, as had formerly been the case. See Walter, Geschichte des Römischen Rechts, § 361, 2nd ed.; Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiqu. p. 550, 2nd ed.—S.

* Savigny has shown that the substance of the *Jus Italicum* consisted in, first, the right of having a free constitution; secondly, the exemption from taxes; and thirdly, the title of the land to be regarded as Quiritarian property. Down to the time of Diocletian Italy was free from both the land-tax and poll-tax; but it has been stated in a previous note (vol. ii. p. 114) that even when Italy lost this exemption, the privilege was still retained by many of the provincial towns, and continued to bear the name of *jus*

* The medimnus equalled 12 imperial gallons, and was equivalent to six modii.

the title of Colony, the first and most favoured daughter of ancient Rome. The venerable parent still maintained the legal and acknowledged supremacy, which was due to her age, to her dignity, and to the remembrance of her former greatness.⁶³

As Constantine urged the progress of the work with the impatience of a lover, the walls, the porticoes, and the principal edifices were completed in a few years, or, according to another account, in a few months:⁶⁴ but this extraordinary diligence should excite the less admiration, since many of the buildings were finished in so hasty and imperfect a manner, that, under the succeeding reign, they were preserved with difficulty from impending ruin.⁶⁵ But while they displayed the vigour and freshness of youth, the founder prepared to celebrate the dedication of his city.⁶⁶ The games and largesses which crowned the pomp of this memorable festival may easily be supposed; but there is one circumstance of a more singular and permanent nature, which ought not entirely to be overlooked. As often as the birthday of the city returned, the statue of Constantine, framed by his order, of gilt wood, and bearing in its right hand a small image of the genius of the place, was erected on a triumphal car. The guards, carrying white tapers, and clothed in their richest apparel, accompanied the solemn procession as it moved through the Hippodrome. When it was opposite to the throne of the reigning

⁶³ Julian (Orat. i. p. 8) celebrates Constantinople as not less superior to all other cities than she was inferior to Rome itself. His learned commentator (Spanheim, p. 75, 76) justifies this language by several parallel and contemporary instances. Zosimus, as well as Socrates and Sozomen, flourished after the division of the empire between the two sons of Theodosius, which established a perfect equality between the old and the new capital.

⁶⁴ Codinus (Antiquitat. p. 8 [p. 17, ed. Bonn]) affirms that the foundations of Constantinople were laid in the year of the world 5837 (A.D. 329), on the 20th of September, and that the city was dedicated the 11th of May, 5838 (A.D. 330). He connects these dates with several characteristic epochs, but they contradict each other; the authority of Codinus is of little weight, and the space which he assigns must appear insufficient. The term of ten years is given us by Julian (Orat. i. p. 8); and Spanheim labours to establish the truth of it (p. 69-75), by the help of two passages from Themistius (Orat. iv. p. 58) and of Philostorgius (l. ii. c. 9), which form a period from the year 324 to the year 334. Modern critics are divided concerning this point of chronology, and their different sentiments are very accurately described by Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 619-625.^a

⁶⁵ Themistius, Orat. iii. p. 47. Zosim. l. ii. [c. 32] p. 108. Constantine himself, in one of his laws (Cod. Theod. l. xv. tit. i. [leg. 23?]), betrays his impatience.

⁶⁶ Cedrenus and Zonaras, faithful to the mode of superstition which prevailed in their own times, assure us that Constantinople was consecrated to the virgin Mother of God.

Italicum, though no longer appropriate. This is the only thing that accounts for mention being made of a *jus Italicum* in the Code of Justinian, at a time when the free constitution of the towns and the institution of Quiritarian property had been put an end to. Hence the difficulty of Gibbon disappears, as the *jus Italicum* continued to confer the privilege of exemp-

tion from taxation. Savigny, Ueber das *Jus Italicum* in Vermischte Schriften, vol. i. p. 29, seq., and Geschichte des Römischen Rechts, vol. i. p. 74, seq. 2nd ed.—S.

^a The city was dedicated on the 11th of May, A.D. 330 (see the authorities in Clinton, Fasti Rom. vol. i. p. 384), but we need not therefore conclude that its buildings were all finished by that time.—S.

emperor, he rose from his seat, and with grateful reverence adored the memory of his predecessor.⁶⁷ At the festival of the dedication, an edict, engraved on a column of marble, bestowed the title of SECOND or NEW ROME on the city of Constantine.⁶⁸ But the name of Constantinople⁶⁹ has prevailed over that honourable epithet, and after the revolution of fourteen centuries still perpetuates the fame of its author.⁷⁰

The foundation of a new capital is naturally connected with the establishment of a new form of civil and military administration. The distinct view of the complicated system of policy introduced by Diocletian, improved by Constantine, and completed by his immediate successors, may not only amuse the fancy by the singular picture of a great empire, but will tend to illustrate the secret and internal causes of its rapid decay. In the pursuit of any remarkable institution, we may be frequently led into the more early or the more recent times of the Roman history; but the proper limits of this inquiry will be included within a period of about one hundred and thirty years, from the accession of Constantine to the publication of the Theodosian code;⁷¹ from which, as well as from the *Notitia* of the East and West,⁷² we derive the most copious and authentic information of the state of the empire. This variety of objects will suspend, for some time, the course of the narrative; but the interruption will be censured only by those readers who are insensible to the importance of laws and manners, while they peruse, with eager

⁶⁷ The earliest and most complete account of this extraordinary ceremony may be found in the Alexandrian Chronicle, p. 285. Tillemont, and the other friends of Constantine, who are offended with the air of Paganism which seems unworthy of a Christian prince, had a right to consider it as doubtful, but they were not authorised to omit the mention of it.

⁶⁸ Sozomen, l. ii. c. 3. Ducange, C. P. l. i. c. 6. Velut ipsius Romæ filiam, is the expression of Augustin. de Civitat. Dei, l. v. c. 25.

⁶⁹ Eutropius, l. x. c. 8. Julian. Orat. i. p. 8. Ducange, C. P. l. i. c. 5. The name of Constantinople is extant on the medals of Constantine.

⁷⁰ The lively Fontenelle (*Dialogues des Morts*, xii.) affects to deride the vanity of human ambition, and seems to triumph in the disappointment of Constantine, whose immortal name is now lost in the vulgar appellation of Istantbol, a Turkish corruption of *ἡ ἑὴν πόλιν*. Yet the original name is still preserved, 1. By the nations of Europe. 2. By the modern Greeks. 3. By the Arabs, whose writings are diffused over the wide extent of their conquests in Asia and Africa. See d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 275. 4. By the more learned Turks, and by the emperor himself in his public mandates. Cantemir's *History of the Othman Empire*, p. 51.

⁷¹ The Theodosian code was promulgated A.D. 438. See the *Prolegomena* of Godefroy, c. i. p. 185.

⁷² Pancirolus, in his elaborate Commentary, assigns to the *Notitia* a date almost similar to that of the Theodosian Code; but his proofs, or rather conjectures, are extremely feeble. I should be rather inclined to place this useful work between the final division of the empire (A.D. 395) and the successful invasion of Gaul by the barbarians (A.D. 407). See *Histoire des Anciens Peuples de l'Europe*, tom. vii. p. 40.^a

^a The reader may consult with advantage the last edition of the *Notitia*, Bonn, the valuable Commentary of Böcking on 1839-1853.—S.

curiosity, the transient intrigues of a court, or the accidental event of a battle.

The manly pride of the Romans, content with substantial power, had left to the vanity of the East the forms and ceremonies of ostentatious greatness.⁷³ But when they lost even the semblance of those virtues which were derived from their ancient freedom, the simplicity of Roman manners was insensibly corrupted by the stately affectation of the courts of Asia. The distinctions of personal merit and influence, so conspicuous in a republic, so feeble and obscure under a monarchy, were abolished by the despotism of the emperors; who substituted in their room a severe subordination of rank and office, from the titled slaves who were seated on the steps of the throne, to the meanest instruments of arbitrary power. This multitude of abject dependents was interested in the support of the actual government, from the dread of a revolution which might at once confound their hopes and intercept the reward of their services. In this divine hierarchy (for such it is frequently styled) every rank was marked with the most scrupulous exactness, and its dignity was displayed in a variety of trifling and solemn ceremonies, which it was a study to learn, and a sacrilege to neglect.⁷⁴ The purity of the Latin language was debased, by adopting, in the intercourse of pride and flattery, a profusion of epithets which Tully would scarcely have understood, and which Augustus would have rejected with indignation. The principal officers of the empire were saluted, even by the sovereign himself, with the deceitful titles of your *Sincerity*, your *Gravity*, your *Excellency*, your *Eminence*, your *sublime and wonderful Magnitude*, your *illustrious and magnificent Highness*.⁷⁵ The codicils or patents of their office were curiously emblazoned with such emblems as were best adapted to explain its nature and high dignity—the image or portrait of the reigning emperors; a triumphal car; the book of mandates placed on a table, covered with a rich carpet, and illuminated

⁷³ Scilicet externæ superbæ sueto, non inerat notitia nostri (perhaps *nostræ*);^a apud quos vis Imperii valet, inania transmittuntur. Tacit. Annal. xv. 31. The gradation from the style of freedom and simplicity to that of form and servitude may be traced in the Epistles of Cicero, of Pliny, and of Symmachus.

⁷⁴ The emperor Gratian, after confirming a law of precedency published by Valentinian, the father of his *Divinity*, thus continues: Siquis igitur indebitum sibi locum usurpaverit, nullâ se ignoracione defendat; sitque plane sacrilegii reus, qui divina præcepta neglexerit. Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. v. leg. 2.

⁷⁵ Consult the *Notitia Dignitatum* at the end of the Theodosian Code, tom. vi. p. 316.^b

^a *Nostræ* is an unhappy specimen of emendation.—S.

^b Constantin, qui remplaça le grand Patriciat par une noblesse titrée, et qui changea avec d'autres institutions la nature de la société Latine, est le véritable fondateur de la royauté moderne, dans ce

qu'elle conserva de Romain. Chateaubriand, Etud. Histor. Preface, i. 151. Manso (Leben Constantins des Grossen, p. 153, &c.) has given a lucid view of the dignities and duties of the officers in the Imperial court.—M.

by four tapers; the allegorical figures of the provinces which they governed; or the appellations and standards of the troops whom they commanded. Some of these official ensigns were really exhibited in their hall of audience; others preceded their pompous march whenever they appeared in public; and every circumstance of their demeanour, their dress, their ornaments, and their train, was calculated to inspire a deep reverence for the representatives of supreme majesty. By a philosophic observer the system of the Roman government might have been mistaken for a splendid theatre, filled with players of every character and degree, who repeated the language, and imitated the passions, of their original model.⁷⁶

All the magistrates of sufficient importance to find a place in the general state of the empire were accurately divided into three classes—1. The *Illustrious*; 2. The *Spectabiles*, or Three ranks of honour. *Respectable*; and, 3. The *Clarissimi*, whom we may translate by the word *Honourable*. In the times of Roman simplicity, the last-mentioned epithet was used only as a vague expression of deference, till it became at length the peculiar and appropriated title of all who were members of the senate,⁷⁷ and consequently of all who, from that venerable body, were selected to govern the provinces. The vanity of those who, from their rank and office, might claim a superior distinction above the rest of the senatorial order, was long afterwards indulged with the new appellation of *Respectable*: but the title of *Illustrious* was always reserved to some eminent personages who were obeyed or revered by the two subordinate classes. It was communicated only, I. To the consuls and patricians; II. To the Prætorian præfects, with the præfects of Rome and Constantinople; III. To the masters general of the cavalry and the infantry; and, IV. To the seven ministers of the palace, who exercised their *sacred* functions about the person of the emperor.⁷⁸ Among those illustrious magistrates who were esteemed co-ordinate with each other, the seniority of appointment gave place to the union of dignities.⁷⁹ By the expedient of honorary codicils, the emperors, who were fond of multiplying their favours, might sometimes gratify the vanity, though not the ambition, of impatient courtiers.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Pancirolus ad Notitiam utriusque Imperii, p. 39. But his explanations are obscure, and he does not sufficiently distinguish the painted emblems from the effective ensigns of office.

⁷⁷ In the Pandects, which may be referred to the reigns of the Antonines, *Clarissimus* is the ordinary and legal title of a senator.

⁷⁸ Pancirol. p. 12-17. I have not taken any notice of the two inferior ranks, *Perfectissimus* and *Egregius*, which were given to many persons who were not raised to the senatorial dignity.

⁷⁹ Cod. Theodos. l. vi. tit. vi. The rules of precedency are ascertained with the most minute accuracy by the emperors, and illustrated with equal prolixity by their learned interpreter.

⁸⁰ Cod. Theodos. l. vi. tit. xxii.

I. As long as the Roman consuls were the first magistrates of a free state, they derived their right to power from the choice of the people. As long as the emperors condescended to disguise the servitude which they imposed, the consuls were still elected by the real or apparent suffrage of the senate. From the reign of Diocletian even these vestiges of liberty were abolished, and the successful candidates, who were invested with the annual honours of the consulship, affected to deplore the humiliating condition of their predecessors. The Scipios and the Catos had been reduced to solicit the votes of plebeians, to pass through the tedious and expensive forms of a popular election, and to expose their dignity to the shame of a public refusal; while their own happier fate had reserved them for an age and government in which the rewards of virtue were assigned by the unerring wisdom of a gracious sovereign.⁸¹ In the epistles which the emperor addressed to the two consuls elect, it was declared that they were created by his sole authority.⁸² Their names and portraits, engraved on gilt tablets of ivory, were dispersed over the empire as presents to the provinces, the cities, the magistrates, the senate, and the people.⁸³ Their solemn inauguration was performed at the place of the Imperial residence; and during a period of one hundred and twenty years Rome was constantly deprived of the presence of her ancient magistrates.⁸⁴ On the morning of the first of January the consuls assumed the ensigns of their dignity. Their dress was a robe of purple, embroidered in silk and gold, and

⁸¹ Ausonius (in Gratianum Actione) basely expatiates on this unworthy topic, which is managed by Mamertinus (Panegy. Vet. xi. [x.] 16, 19) with somewhat more freedom and ingenuity.

⁸² Cum de Consulibus in annum creandis, solus mecum volutarem . . . te Consulem et designavi, et declaravi, et priorem nuncupavi; are some of the expressions employed by the emperor Gratian to his preceptor the poet Ausonius.^a

⁸³ Immanesque . . . dentes
Qui secti ferro in tabulas auroque micantes,
Inscripti rutilum cælo Consule nomen
Per proceres et vulgus eant.

Claud. de Cons. Stilichon. iii. 346.

Montfaucon has represented some of these tablets or dypticks [diptychs, διπτυχα.—S.]; see *Supplément à l'Antiquité expliquée*, tom. iii. p. 220.

⁸⁴ Consule lætatur post plurima sæcula viso
Pallanteus apex: agnoscunt rostra curules
Auditas quondam proavis: desuetaque cingit
Regius auratis fora fascibus Ulpia lictor.

Claud. in vi. Cons. Honorii, 643.

From the reign of Carus to the sixth consulship of Honorius there was an interval of one hundred and twenty years, during which the emperors were always absent from Rome on the first day of January. See the *Chronologie de Tillemont*, tom. iii. iv. and v.

^a It appears, however, from other authorities, that the appointment of the consuls was, at least nominally, made by the senate and ratified by the emperor.

See Symmach. Ep. v. 15, x. 66. Laudes in patr. p. 39, pro patre, p. 42, ed. Mai, Frank, 1816; from Marquardt in Becker's *Römisch. Alterth.* vol. ii. pt. iii. p. 242.—S.

sometimes ornamented with costly gems.⁸⁵ On this solemn occasion they were attended by the most eminent officers of the state and army in the habit of senators; and the useless fasces, armed with the once formidable axes, were borne before them by the lictors.⁸⁶ The procession moved from the palace⁸⁷ to the Forum or principal square of the city; where the consuls ascended their tribunal, and seated themselves in the curule chairs, which were framed after the fashion of ancient times. They immediately exercised an act of jurisdiction, by the manumission of a slave who was brought before them for that purpose; and the ceremony was intended to represent the celebrated action of the elder Brutus, the author of liberty and of the consulship, when he admitted among his fellow-citizens the faithful Vindex, who had revealed the conspiracy of the Tarquins.⁸⁸ The public festival was continued during several days in all the principal cities; in Rome, from custom; in Constantinople, from imitation; in Carthage, Antioch, and Alexandria, from the love of pleasure and the superfluity of wealth.⁸⁹ In the two capitals of the empire the annual games of the theatre, the circus, and the amphitheatre⁹⁰ cost four thousand pounds of gold,^a (about) one hundred and sixty thousand pounds

⁸⁵ See Claudian in Cons. Prob. et Olybrii, 178, &c.; and in iv. Cons. Honorii, 585, &c.; though in the latter it is not easy to separate the ornaments of the emperor from those of the consul. Ausonius received from the liberality of Gratian a *vestis palmata*, or robe of state, in which the figure of the emperor Constantius was embroidered.

⁸⁶ Cernis ut armorum proceres legumque potentes
Patricios sumunt habitus, et more Gabino
Discolor incedit legio, positisque parumper
Bellorum signis, sequitur vexilla Quirini?
Lictori cedunt aquilæ, ridetque togatus
Miles, et in mediis effulget curia castris?

Claud. in iv. Cons. Honorii, 5.

— *strictusque procul radiare secures.*

In Cons. Prob. 231.

⁸⁷ See Valesius ad Ammian. Marcellin. l. xxii. c. 7.

⁸⁸ Auspice mox lætum sonuit clamore tribunal,
Te fastos ineunte quater; solemnia ludit
Omina Libertas: deductum Vindice morem
Lex servat, famulusque jugo laxatus herili
Ducitur, et grato remeat securior ictu.

Claud. in iv. Cons. Honorii, 611.

⁸⁹ Celebrant quidem sollemnes istos dies omnes ubique urbes quæ sub legibus agunt; et Roma de more, et Constantinopolis de imitatione, et Antiochia pro luxu, et discincta Carthago, et domus fluminis Alexandria, sed Treviri Principis beneficio. Ausonius in Grat. Actione [p. 715, ed. Amst. 1671].

⁹⁰ Claudian (in Cons. Mall. Theodori, 279-331) describes, in a lively and fanciful manner, the various games of the circus, the theatre, and the amphitheatre, exhibited by the new consul. The sanguinary combats of gladiators had already been prohibited.

^a Not 4000 pounds of gold, but 2000. Procopius says 20 centenaria, which are equal to 144,000 solidi; and from the time of Constantine there were 72 solidi to the pound. Supposing the solidus to be worth 10s. English (see note on p. 338),

the sum expended on this occasion would have been 72,000l. The emperor Justinian curtailed this prodigious expense. See Novell. cv. As the exhibition of these games was the sole duty of the consuls, the words *iracula* and *consulatus* came to

sterling; and if so heavy an expense surpassed the faculties or the inclination of the magistrates themselves, the sum was supplied from the Imperial treasury.⁹¹ As soon as the consuls had discharged these customary duties, they were at liberty to retire into the shade of private life, and to enjoy during the remainder of the year the undisturbed contemplation of their own greatness. They no longer presided in the national councils; they no longer executed the resolutions of peace or war. Their abilities (unless they were employed in more effective offices) were of little moment; and their names served only as the legal date of the year in which they had filled the chair of Marius and of Cicero. Yet it was still felt and acknowledged, in the last period of Roman servitude, that this empty name might be compared, and even preferred, to the possession of substantial power. The title of consul was still the most splendid object of ambition, the noblest reward of virtue and loyalty. The emperors themselves, who disdained the faint shadow of the republic, were conscious that they acquired an additional splendour and majesty as often as they assumed the annual honours of the consular dignity.⁹²

The proudest and most perfect separation which can be found in any age or country between the nobles and the people is perhaps that of the Patricians and the Plebeians, as it was established in the first age of the Roman republic. Wealth and honours, the offices of the state, and the ceremonies of religion, were almost exclusively possessed by the former; who, preserving the purity of their blood with the most insulting jealousy,⁹³ held their clients in a condition of specious vassalage. But these distinctions, so incompatible with the spirit of a free people, were removed, after a long struggle, by the persevering efforts of the Tribunes. The most active and successful of the Plebeians accumulated wealth, aspired to honours, deserved triumphs, contracted alliances, and, after some generations, assumed the pride of ancient nobility.⁹⁴ The Patrician

⁹¹ Procopius in *Hist. Arcana*, c. 26.

⁹² In *Consulatu honos sine labore suscipitur*. (Mamertin in *Panegy. Vet.* xi. [x.] 2).^a This exalted idea of the consulship is borrowed from an Oration (iii. p. 107) pronounced by Julian in the servile court of Constantius. See the Abbé de la Bléterie (*Mémoires de l'Académie*, tom. xxiv. p. 289), who delights to pursue the vestiges of the old constitution, and who sometimes finds them in his copious fancy.

⁹³ Intermarriages between the Patricians and Plebeians were prohibited by the laws of the XII Tables; and the uniform operations of human nature may attest that the custom survived the law. See in Livy (iv. 1-6) the pride of family urged by the consul, and the rights of mankind asserted by the tribune Canuleius.

⁹⁴ See the animated picture drawn by Sallust, in the Jugurthine war, of the pride of the nobles, and even of the virtuous Metellus, who was unable to brook the idea

signify the money expended upon these occasions. See Marquardt, *ut supra*, vol. ii. pt. iii. p. 245.—S.

Theodoric, "*factus est consul ordinarius, quod summum bonum primumque in mundo decus edicitur.*" Jornandes de *Reb. Get.* c. 57.—S.

^a At a still later time it is said of

families, on the other hand, whose original number was never recruited till the end of the commonwealth, either failed in the ordinary course of nature, or were extinguished in so many foreign and domestic wars, or, through a want of merit or fortune, insensibly mingled with the mass of the people.⁹⁵ Very few remained who could derive their pure and genuine origin from the infancy of the city, or even from that of the republic, when Cæsar and Augustus, Claudius and Vespasian, created from the body of the senate a competent number of new Patrician families, in the hope of perpetuating an order which was still considered as honourable and sacred.⁹⁶ But these artificial supplies (in which the reigning house was always included) were rapidly swept away by the rage of tyrants, by frequent revolutions, by the change of manners, and by the intermixture of nations.⁹⁷ Little more was left when Constantine ascended the throne than a vague and imperfect tradition that the Patricians had once been the first of the Romans. To form a body of nobles, whose influence may restrain while it secures the authority of the monarch, would have been very inconsistent with the character and policy of Constantine; but, had he seriously entertained such a design, it might have exceeded the measure of his power to ratify by an arbitrary edict an institution which must expect the sanction of time and of opinion. He revived, indeed, the title of PATRICIANS, but he revived it as a personal, not as an hereditary distinction. They yielded only to the transient superiority of the annual consuls; but they enjoyed the pre-eminence over all the great officers of state, with the most familiar access to the person of the prince. This honourable rank was bestowed on them for life; and, as they were usually favourites and ministers who had grown old in the Imperial

that the honour of the consulship should be bestowed on the obscure merit of his lieutenant Marius (c. 64). Two hundred years before, the race of the Metelli themselves were confounded among the Plebeians of Rome; and from the etymology of their name of *Cæcilius*, there is reason to believe that those haughty nobles derived their origin from a sutler.

⁹⁵ In the year of Rome 800 very few remained, not only of the old Patrician families, but even of those which had been created by Cæsar and Augustus. (Tacit. *Annal.* xi. 25.) The family of Scaurus (a branch of the Patrician *Æmili*) was degraded so low that his father, who exercised the trade of a charcoal merchant, left him only ten slaves and somewhat less than three hundred pounds sterling. (Valerius Maximus, l. iv. c. 4, n. 11. Aurel. Victor in Scauro. [*De Viris Ill.* 72]). The family was saved from oblivion by the merit of the son.

⁹⁶ Tacit. *Annal.* xi. 25. Dion Cassius, l. lii. [c. 42] p. 693. The virtues of Agricola, who was created a Patrician by the emperor Vespasian, reflected honour on that ancient order; but his ancestors had not any claim beyond an Equestrian nobility.

⁹⁷ This failure would have been almost impossible if it were true, as Casaubon compels Aurelius Victor to affirm (ad Sueton. in Cæsar. c. 42; see Hist. August p. 203 [Trebell. Poll. Claud. c. 3], and Casaubon Comment. p. 220), that Vespasian created at once a thousand Patrician families. But this extravagant number is too much even for the whole Senatorial order, unless we should include all the Roman knights who were distinguished by the permission of wearing the *laticlave*.

court, the true etymology of the word was perverted by ignorance and flattery; and the Patricians of Constantine were revered as the adopted *Fathers* of the emperor and the republic.⁹⁸

II. The fortunes of the Prætorian præfects were essentially different from those of the consuls and Patricians. The latter saw their ancient greatness evaporate in a vain title. The former, rising by degrees from the most humble condition, were invested with the civil and military administration of the Roman world. From the reign of Severus to that of Diocletian, the guards and the palace, the laws and the finances, the armies and the provinces, were intrusted to their superintending care; and, like the vizirs of the East, they held with one hand the seal, and with the other the standard, of the empire. The ambition of the præfects, always formidable, and sometimes fatal to the masters whom they served, was supported by the strength of the Prætorian bands; but, after those haughty troops had been weakened by Diocletian and finally suppressed by Constantine, the præfects, who survived their fall, were reduced without difficulty to the station of useful and obedient ministers. When they were no longer responsible for the safety of the emperor's person, they resigned the jurisdiction which they had hitherto claimed and exercised over all the departments of the palace. They were deprived by Constantine of all military command as soon as they had ceased to lead into the field, under their immediate orders, the flower of the Roman troops; and, at length, by a singular revolution, the captains of the guards were transformed into the civil magistrates of the provinces. According to the plan of government instituted by Diocletian, the four princes had each their Prætorian præfect; and after the monarchy was once more united in the person of Constantine, he still continued to create the same number of FOUR PRÆFECTS, and intrusted to their care the same provinces which they already administered. 1. The præfect of the East stretched his ample jurisdiction into the three parts of the globe which were subject to the Romans, from the cataracts of the Nile to the banks of the Phasis, and from the mountains of Thrace to the frontiers of Persia. 2. The important provinces of Pannonia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece once acknowledged the authority of the præfect of Illyricum. 3. The power of the præfect of Italy was not confined to the country from whence he derived his title; it extended over the additional territory of Rætia as far as the banks of the Danube, over the dependent islands of the Mediterranean, and over that part of the continent of Africa which lies between the confines of Cyrene and those of Tingitania. 4. The præfect of the Gauls comprehended under that

⁹⁸ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 40] p. 118; and Godefroy ad Cod. Theodos. l. vi. tit. vi

plural denomination the kindred provinces of Britain and Spain, and his authority was obeyed from the wall of Antoninus to the foot of Mount Atlas.⁹⁹

After the Prætorian præfects had been dismissed from all military command, the civil functions which they were ordained to exercise over so many subject nations were adequate to the ambition and abilities of the most consummate ministers. To their wisdom was committed the supreme administration of justice and of the finances, the two objects which, in a state of peace, comprehend almost all the respective duties of the sovereign and of the people; of the former, to protect the citizens who are obedient to the laws; of the latter, to contribute the share of their property which is required for the expenses of the state. The coin, the highways, the posts, the granaries, the manufactures, whatever could interest the public prosperity, was moderated by the authority of the Prætorian præfects. As the immediate representatives of the Imperial majesty, they were empowered to explain, to enforce, and on some occasions to modify the general edicts by their discretionary proclamations. They watched over the conduct of the provincial governors, removed the negligent, and inflicted punishments on the guilty. From all the inferior jurisdictions an appeal in every matter of importance, either civil or criminal, might be brought before the tribunal of the præfect: but *his* sentence was final and absolute; and the emperors themselves refused to admit any complaints against the judgment or the integrity of a magistrate whom they honoured with such unbounded confidence.¹⁰⁰ His appointments were suitable to his dignity;¹⁰¹ and, if avarice was his ruling passion, he enjoyed frequent opportunities of collecting a rich harvest of fees, of presents, and of perquisites. Though the emperors no longer dreaded the ambition of their præfects, they were attentive to counterbalance the power of this great office by the uncertainty and shortness of its duration.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 33] p. 109, 110. If we had not fortunately possessed this satisfactory account of the division of the power and provinces of the Prætorian præfects, we should frequently have been perplexed amidst the copious details of the Code, and the circumstantial minuteness of the Notitia.

¹⁰⁰ See a law of Constantine himself. A præfectis autem prætorio provocare, non sinimus. Cod. Justinian. l. vii. tit. lxii. leg. 19. Charisius, a lawyer of the time of Constantine (Heinec. Hist. Juris Romani, p. 349), who admits this law as a fundamental principle of jurisprudence, compares the Prætorian præfects to the masters of the horse of the ancient dictators. Pandect. l. i. tit. xi.

¹⁰¹ When Justinian, in the exhausted condition of the empire, instituted a Prætorian præfect for Africa, he allowed him a salary of one hundred pounds of gold. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. xxvii. leg. i.

¹⁰² For this, and the other dignities of the empire, it may be sufficient to refer to the ample commentaries of Panciroli and Godefroy, who have diligently collected and accurately digested in their proper order all the legal and historical materials. From those authors Dr. Howell (History of the World, vol. ii. p. 24-77) has derived a very distinct abridgment of the state of the Roman empire.

From their superior importance and dignity, Rome and Constantinople were alone excepted from the jurisdiction of the Prætorian præfects. The immense size of the city, and the experience of the tardy, ineffectual operation of the laws, had furnished the policy of Augustus with a specious pretence for introducing a new magistrate, who alone could restrain a servile and turbulent populace by the strong arm of arbitrary power.¹⁰³ Valerius Messalla was appointed the first præfect of Rome, that his reputation might countenance so invidious a measure; but at the end of a few days that accomplished citizen¹⁰⁴ resigned his office, declaring, with a spirit worthy of the friend of Brutus, that he found himself incapable of exercising a power incompatible with public freedom.¹⁰⁵ As the sense of liberty became less exquisite, the advantages of order were more clearly understood; and the præfect, who seemed to have been designed as a terror only to slaves and vagrants, was permitted to extend his civil and criminal jurisdiction over the equestrian and noble families of Rome. The prætors, annually created as the judges of law and equity, could not long dispute the possession of the Forum with a vigorous and permanent magistrate who was usually admitted into the confidence of the prince. Their courts were deserted; their number, which had once fluctuated between twelve and eighteen,¹⁰⁶ was gradually reduced to two or three; and their important functions were confined to the expensive obligation¹⁰⁷ of exhibiting games for the amusement of the people. After the office of Roman consuls had been changed into a vain pageant, which was rarely displayed in the capital, the præfects assumed their vacant place in the senate, and were soon acknowledged as the ordinary presidents of that venerable assembly. They received appeals from the distance of one hundred miles; and it was allowed as a principle of

¹⁰³ Tacit. Annal. vi. 11. Euseb. in Chron. p. 155. Dion Cassius, in the oration of Mæcenas (l. lii. [c. 21] p. 675), describes the prerogatives of the præfect of the city as they were established in his own time.

¹⁰⁴ The fame of Messalla has been scarcely equal to his merit. In the earliest youth he was recommended by Cicero to the friendship of Brutus. He followed the standard of the republic till it was broken in the fields of Philippi: he then accepted and deserved the favour of the most moderate of the conquerors; and uniformly asserted his freedom and dignity in the court of Augustus. The triumph of Messalla was justified by the conquest of Aquitain. As an orator he disputed the palm of eloquence with Cicero himself. Messalla cultivated every muse, and was the patron of every man of genius. He spent his evenings in philosophic conversation with Horace; assumed his place at table between Delia and Tibullus; and amused his leisure by encouraging the poetical talents of young Ovid.

¹⁰⁵ Incivilem esse potestatem contestans, says the translator of Eusebius. Tacitus expresses the same idea in other words. *quasi nescius exercendi*.

¹⁰⁶ See Lipsius, Excursus D. ad l. lib. Tacit. Annal.

¹⁰⁷ Heineccii Element. Juris Civilis secund. ordinem Pandect. tom. i. p. 70. See likewise Spanheim de Usu Numismatum, tom. ii. dissertat. x. p. 119. In the year 450 Marcian published a law that *three* citizens should be annually created prætors of Constantinople by the choice of the senate, but with their own consent. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. xxxix. leg. 2.

jurisprudence that all municipal authority was derived from them alone.¹⁰⁸ In the discharge of his laborious employment the governor of Rome was assisted by fifteen officers, some of whom had been originally his equals, or even his superiors. The principal departments were relative to the command of a numerous watch, established as a safeguard against fires, robberies, and nocturnal disorders; the custody and distribution of the public allowance of corn and provisions; the care of the port, of the aqueducts, of the common sewers, and of the navigation and bed of the Tiber; the inspection of the markets, the theatres, and of the private as well as public works. Their vigilance ensured the three principal objects of a regular police—safety, plenty, and cleanliness; and, as a proof of the attention of government to preserve the splendour and ornaments of the capital, a particular inspector was appointed for the statues; the guardian, as it were, of that inanimate people, which, according to the extravagant computation of an old writer, was scarcely inferior in number to the living inhabitants of Rome. About thirty years after the foundation of Constantinople a similar magistrate was created in that rising metropolis, for the same uses and with the same powers. A perfect equality was established between the dignity of the *two* municipal and that of the *four* Prætorian præfects.¹⁰⁹

Those who in the Imperial hierarchy were distinguished by the title of *Respectable* formed an intermediate class between the *illustrious* præfects and the *honourable* magistrates of the provinces. In this class the proconsuls of Asia, Achaia, and Africa claimed a pre-eminence, which was yielded to the remembrance of their ancient dignity; and the appeal from their tribunal to that of the præfects was almost the only mark of their dependence.¹¹⁰ But the civil government of the empire was distributed into thirteen great DIOCESES, each of which equalled the just measure of a powerful kingdom. The first of these dioceses was subject to the jurisdiction of the *count* of the East; and we may convey some idea of the importance and variety of his functions by observing that six hundred apparitors, who would be styled at present either secretaries, or clerks, or ushers, or messengers, were employed in his immediate

The pro-
consuls,
vice-præ-
fects, &c.

¹⁰⁸ Quidquid igitur intra urbem admittitur, ad P. U. videtur pertinere; sed et siquid intra centesimum milliariū. Ulpian in Pandect. l. i. tit. xii. n. 1. He proceeds to enumerate the various offices of the præfect, who, in the code of Justinian (l. i. tit. xxxix. leg. 3), is declared to precede and command all city magistrates sine injuriâ ac detrimento honoris alieni.

¹⁰⁹ Besides our usual guides, we may observe that Felix Cantelorius has written a separate treatise, *De Præfecto Urbis*; and that many curious details concerning the police of Rome and Constantinople are contained in the fourteenth book of the Theodosian Code.

¹¹⁰ Eunapius affirms that the proconsul of Asia was independent of the præfect; which must, however, be understood with some allowance: the jurisdiction of the vice-præfect he most assuredly disclaimed. Pancirolus, p. 161.

office.¹¹¹ The place of *Augustal præfect* of Egypt was no longer filled by a Roman knight; but the name was retained; and the extraordinary powers which the situation of the country and the temper of the inhabitants had once made indispensable were still continued to the governor. The eleven remaining dioceses—of Asiana, Pontica, and Thrace; of Macedonia, Dacia, and Pannonia, or Western Illyricum; of Italy and Africa; of Gaul, Spain, and Britain—were governed by twelve *vicars* or *vice-præfects*,¹¹² whose name sufficiently explains the nature and dependence of their office. It may be added that the lieutenant-generals of the Roman armies, the military counts and dukes, who will be hereafter mentioned, were allowed the rank and title of *Respectable*.

As the spirit of jealousy and ostentation prevailed in the councils of the emperors, they proceeded with anxious diligence to divide the substance and to multiply the titles of power. The vast countries which the Roman conquerors had united under the same simple form of administration were imperceptibly crumbled into minute fragments, till at length the whole empire was distributed into one hundred and sixteen provinces, each of which supported an expensive and splendid establishment. Of these, three were governed by *proconsuls*, thirty-seven by *consulars*, five by *correctors*, and seventy-one by *presidents*.^b The appellations of these magistrates were different; they ranked in successive order, the ensigns of their dignity were curiously varied, and their situation, from accidental circumstances, might be more or less agreeable or advantageous. But they were all (excepting only the *proconsuls*) alike included in the class of *honourable* persons; and they were alike intrusted, during the pleasure of the prince, and under the authority of the *præfects* or their deputies, with the administration of justice and the finances in their respective districts. The ponderous volumes

¹¹¹ The *proconsul* of Africa had four hundred apparitors; and they all received large salaries, either from the treasury or the province. See Pancirol. p. 26, and Cod. Justinian. l. xii. tit. lvi. lvii.

¹¹² In Italy there was likewise the *Vicar of Rome*. It has been much disputed whether his jurisdiction measured one hundred miles from the city, or whether it stretched over the ten southern provinces of Italy.^a

^a It clearly appears from the *Notitia* that the ten southern provinces of Italy were under the "*Vicarius Urbis Romæ*," while the northern provinces were under the "*Vicarius Italiæ*" (see Table on p. 315). Thus the name of *Italia*, by a singular change, came to be specially applied (in official language at least) to these northern provinces, which in the time of the republic were excluded from *Italia* (being called *Gallia Cisalpina*); whereas the pro-

vinces, to which the name of *Italia* was then confined, were now excluded from it. The practice was confirmed for a time by the circumstance that the northern part of Italy became the seat of the Lombard monarchy, which assumed the title of the Kingdom of Italy (*Regnum Italiæ*). See Böcking, ad *Notit. Dignit.* ii. 18; Gothofred, ad *Cod. Theodos.* xi. tit. 1, l. 6; Niebuhr, *Hist. of Rome*, vol. i. p. 21; Smith, *Dict. of Greek and Roman Geography*, art. *Italia*.—S.

The following Table, taken from Marquardt (Becker's Handbuch der Römischen Alterthümer, vol. iii part i. p. 240), shows the division of the Empire under the four Prætorian Prefects.

| I. PREFECTUS PRÆTORIO GALLIARUM. | II. PREFECTUS PRÆTORIO ITALIÆ. | III. PREFECTUS PRÆTORIO ILLYRICI. | IV. PREFECTUS PRÆTORIO ORIENTIS. |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p><i>A. Vicarius Hispaniæ.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Bætiæ. 2. " Lusitanæ. 3. " Galliciæ. 4. Præses Tarraconensis. 5. " Carthaginensis. 6. " Tingitanæ. 7. " Insularum Balearium. <p><i>B. Vicarius Septem Provinciarum.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Viennensis. 2. " Lugdunensis. 3. " Germaniæ I. 4. " Germaniæ II. 5. " Belgicæ I. 6. " Belgicæ II. 7. Præses Alpinum Maritimum. 8. " Venetum et Grænarum. 9. " Aquitanicæ I. 10. " Aquitanicæ II. 11. " Narbonensis I. 12. " Narbonensis II. 13. " Narbonensis III. 14. " Lugdunensis III. 15. " Lugdunensis Senoniæ. <p><i>C. Vicarius Britanniarum.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Maximæ Cæsariensis. 2. " Valentiniæ. 3. Præses Britannia I. 4. " Britannia II. 5. " Flaviæ Cæsariensis. <p>(Together 29.)</p> | <p><i>A. Vicarius Urbis Romæ.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Campaniæ. 2. " Tusciæ et Umbriæ. 3. " Piceni Suburbicari. 4. " Siciliæ. 5. Corrector Apuliæ et Calabriae. 6. Præses Bruttorum et Lucaniæ. 7. Præses Samnii. 8. " Corsicæ. 9. " Corsicæ. 10. " Valeriæ. <p><i>B. Vicarius Italiæ.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Venetiæ et Histrie. 2. " Emiliæ. 3. " Liguriæ. 4. " Flaminia et Piceni Annonarii. 5. Præses Alpinum Cottiarum. 6. " Ræticiæ I. 7. " Ræticiæ II. 8. Consularis Pannoniæ II. 9. Corrector Saviæ. 10. Præses Pannoniæ I. 11. " Dalmatiæ. 12. " Noricum Mediterraneum. 13. " Noricum Ripense. 14. Dux Valeriæ Ripensis. <p><i>C. Vicarius Africae.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Byzacii. 2. " Numidiæ. 3. Præses Tripolitaniæ. 4. " Mauritaniæ Sitifensis. 5. " Mauritaniæ Cæsariensis. <p>The Proconsul of Africa was directly under the Emperor, and not under the Præfectus Præst. Ital. (Together 30.)</p> | <p><i>A. Directly under the Præfect.</i></p> <p>The Diocese of Dacia.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Daciæ Mediterraneæ. 2. Præses Moesiæ I. 3. " Prævalitaniæ. 4. " Dardaniæ. 5. Dux Daciæ Ripensis. <p><i>B. Under a Proconsul.</i></p> <p>Achaia.</p> <p><i>C. Under the Vicarius Macedoniae.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Macedoniae. 2. " Cretae. 3. Præses Thessaliæ. 4. " Epiriæ. 5. " Epiriæ Noriæ. 6. " Macedoniae Salutaris. <p>A part of this last belonged to the Diocæsis Daciæ. (Together 12.)</p> | <p><i>A. Comes Orientis.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Palestinae I. 2. " Syriae I. 3. " Ciliciæ. 4. " Cyri. 5. Præses Palestinae II. 6. " Palestinae Salutaris. 7. " Phœnicæ Libani. 8. " Euphratensis. 9. " Syriae Salutaris. 10. " Mesopotamiae. 11. " Osroëniæ. 12. " Ciliciæ II. 13. Comes Rei Militaris Isauriæ. 14. Dux Arabiæ. <p><i>B. Præfectus Augustalis.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Præses Libyæ Sup. 2. " Libyæ Inf. 3. " Thebaidos. 4. " Aegypti. 5. " Arcadiæ. 6. Corrector Augustaniciæ. <p><i>C. Vicarius Diocæseos Asiaticæ.</i></p> <p>Consularis Pamphyliæ.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. " Lydiae. 2. " Lyciæ. 3. " Lyciæ. 4. " Lyciæ. 5. " Lyciæ. 6. " Lyciæ. 7. " Lyciæ. 8. " Lyciæ. <p><i>D. Vicarius Ponticæ.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Bithyniæ. 2. " Galatiæ. 3. Corrector Paphlagoniæ. 4. Præses Honoriadis. 5. " Galatiæ Salutaris. 6. " Cappadociæ I. 7. " Cappadociæ II. 8. " Pontis Polemoniæ. 9. " Pontis Polemoniæ. 10. " Armeniæ I. 11. " Armeniæ II. <p><i>E. Vicarius Thraciarum.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Europæ. 2. " Thraciæ. 3. Præses Hæmimonti. 4. " Rhodopæ. 5. " Moesiæ II. 6. " Scythiæ. <p>Directly under the Emperor, the Proconsul of Asia: under him,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consularis Hælesponti. 2. Præses Insularum. |

of the Codes and Pandects¹¹³ would furnish ample materials for a minute inquiry into the system of provincial government, as in the space of six centuries it was improved by the wisdom of the Roman statesmen and lawyers. It may be sufficient for the historian to select two singular and salutary provisions, intended to restrain the abuse of authority. 1. For the preservation of peace and order, the governors of the provinces were armed with the sword of justice. They inflicted corporal punishments, and they exercised, in capital offences, the power of life and death. But they were not authorised to indulge the condemned criminal with the choice of his own execution, or to pronounce a sentence of the mildest and most honourable kind of exile. These prerogatives were reserved to the præfects, who alone could impose the heavy fine of fifty pounds of gold: their vicegerents were confined to the trifling weight of a few ounces.¹¹⁴ This distinction, which seems to grant the larger while it denies the smaller degree of authority, was founded on a very rational motive. The smaller degree was infinitely more liable to abuse. The passions of a provincial magistrate might frequently provoke him into acts of oppression, which affected only the freedom or the fortunes of the subject; though, from a principle of prudence, perhaps of humanity, he might still be terrified by the guilt of innocent blood. It may likewise be considered that exile, considerable fines, or the choice of an easy death, relate more particularly to the rich and the noble; and the persons the most exposed to the avarice or resentment of a provincial magistrate were thus removed from his obscure persecution to the more august and impartial tribunal of the Prætorian præfect. 2. As it was reasonably apprehended that the integrity of the judge might be biassed, if his interest was concerned or his affections were engaged, the strictest regulations were established to exclude any person, without the special dispensation of the emperor, from the government of the province where he was born;¹¹⁵ and to prohibit the governor or his son from contracting marriage with a native or an inhabitant;¹¹⁶ or from purchasing slaves, lands, or houses within the extent of his jurisdiction.¹¹⁷ Notwithstanding these rigorous pre-

¹¹³ Among the works of the celebrated Ulpian there was one, in ten books, concerning the office of a proconsul, whose duties in the most essential articles were the same as those of an ordinary governor of a province.

¹¹⁴ The presidents, or consulars, could impose only two ounces; the vice-præfects, three; the proconsuls, count of the East, and præfect of Egypt, six. See Heineccii Jur. Civil. tom. i. p. 75. Pandect. l. xlviii. tit. xix. n. 8. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. liv. leg. 4, 6.

¹¹⁵ Ut nulli patriæ suæ administratio sine speciali principis permissu permittatur. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. xli. This law was first enacted by the emperor Marcus, after the rebellion of Cassius (Dion, l. lxxi. [c. 31, p. 1195]). The same regulation is observed in China, with equal strictness, and with equal effect.

¹¹⁶ Pandect. l. xxiii. tit. ii. n. 38, 57, 63.

¹¹⁷ In jure continetur, ne quis in administratione constitutus aliquid compararet.

cautions, the emperor Constantine, after a reign of twenty-five years, still deplores the venal and oppressive administration of justice, and expresses the warmest indignation that the audience of the judge, his despatch of business, his seasonable delays, and his final sentence, were publicly sold, either by himself or by the officers of his court. The continuance, and perhaps the impunity, of these crimes is attested by the repetition of impotent laws and ineffectual menaces.¹¹⁸

All the civil magistrates were drawn from the profession of the law. The celebrated Institutes of Justinian are addressed to the youth of his dominions who had devoted themselves to the study of Roman jurisprudence; and the sovereign condescends to animate their diligence by the assurance that their skill and ability would in time be rewarded by an adequate share in the government of the republic.¹¹⁹ The rudiments of this lucrative science were taught in all the considerable cities of the East and West; but the most famous school was that of Berytus,¹²⁰ on the coast of Phœnicia, which flourished above three centuries from the time of Alexander Severus, the author perhaps of an institution so advantageous to his native country. After a regular course of education, which lasted five years, the students dispersed themselves through the provinces in search of fortune and honours; nor could they want an inexhaustible supply of business in a great empire already corrupted by the multiplicity of laws, of arts, and of vices. The court of the Prætorian præfect of the East could alone furnish employment for one hundred and fifty advocates, sixty-four of whom were distinguished by peculiar privileges, and two were annually chosen with a salary of sixty pounds of gold to defend the causes of the treasury. The first experiment was made of their judicial talents by appointing them to act occasionally as assessors to the magistrates; from thence they were often raised to preside in the tribunals before which they had pleaded. They obtained the government of a province; and, by the aid of merit, of reputation, or of favour, they

The profession of the law.

Cod. Theod. l. viii. tit. xv. leg. 1. This maxim of common law was enforced by a series of edicts (see the remainder of the title) from Constantine to Justin. From this prohibition, which is extended to the meanest officers of the governor, they except only clothes and provisions. The purchase within five years may be recovered; after which, on information, it devolves to the treasury.

¹¹⁸ Cessent rapaces jam nunc officialium manus; cessent, inquam; nam si moniti non cessaverint, gladiis præcidentur, &c. Cod. Theod. l. i. tit. vii. leg. 1. Zeno enacted that all governors should remain in the province, to answer any accusations, fifty days after the expiration of their power. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. xlix. leg. 1.

¹¹⁹ Summâ igitur ope, et alacri studio has leges nostras accipite; et vosmetipsos sic eruditos ostendite, ut spes vos pulcherrima foveat; toto legitimo opere perfecto, posse etiam nostram rempublicam in partibus ejus vobis credendis gubernari. Justinian. in præf. Institutionum.

¹²⁰ The splendour of the school of Berytus, which preserved in the East the language and jurisprudence of the Romans, may be computed to have lasted from the third to the middle of the sixth century. Heinecc. Jur. Rcm. Hist. p. 351-356.

ascended, by successive steps, to the *illustrious* dignities of the state.¹²¹ In the practice of the bar these men had considered reason as the instrument of dispute; they interpreted the laws according to the dictates of private interest; and the same pernicious habits might still adhere to their characters in the public administration of the state. The honour of a liberal profession has indeed been vindicated by ancient and modern advocates, who have filled the most important stations with pure integrity and consummate wisdom; but in the decline of Roman jurisprudence the ordinary promotion of lawyers was pregnant with mischief and disgrace. The noble art, which had once been preserved as the sacred inheritance of the patricians, was fallen into the hands of freedmen and plebeians,¹²² who, with cunning rather than with skill, exercised a sordid and pernicious trade. Some of them procured admittance into families for the purpose of fomenting differences, of encouraging suits, and of preparing a harvest of gain for themselves or their brethren. Others, recluse in their chambers, maintained the gravity of legal professors, by furnishing a rich client with subtleties to confound the plainest truth, and with arguments to colour the most unjustifiable pretensions. The splendid and popular class was composed of the advocates, who filled the Forum with the sound of their turgid and loquacious rhetoric. Careless of fame and of justice, they are described for the most part as ignorant and rapacious guides, who conducted their clients through a maze of expense, of delay, and of disappointment; from whence, after a tedious series of years, they were at length dismissed, when their patience and fortune were almost exhausted.¹²³

¹²¹ As in a former period I have traced the civil and military promotion of Pertinax. I shall here insert the civil honours of Mallius Theodorus. 1. He was distinguished by his eloquence while he pleaded as an advocate in the court of the Prætorian præfect. 2. He governed one of the provinces of Africa, either as president or consular, and deserved, by his administration, the honour of a brass statue. 3. He was appointed vicar, or vice-præfect of Macedonia. 4. Quæstor. 5. Count of the sacred largesses. 6. Prætorian præfect of the Gauls; whilst he might yet be represented as a young man. 7. After a retreat, perhaps a disgrace, of many years, which Mallius (confounded by some critics with the poet Manilius, see Fabricius Bibliothec. Latin edit. Ernest. tom. i. c. 18, p. 501) employed in the study of the Grecian philosophy, he was named Prætorian præfect of Italy, in the year 397. 8. While he still exercised that great office, he was created, in the year 399, consul for the West; and his name, on account of the infamy of his colleague, the eunuch Eutropius, often stands alone in the Fasti. 9. In the year 408 Mallius was appointed a second time Prætorian præfect of Italy. Even in the venal panegyric of Claudian we may discover the merit of Mallius Theodorus, who, by a rare felicity, was the intimate friend both of Symmachus and of St. Augustin. See Tillemont, Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 1110-1114.

¹²² Mamertinus in Panegy. Vet. xi. [x.] 20. Asterius apud Photium, p. 1500.

¹²³ The curious passage of Ammianus (l. xxx. c. 4), in which he paints the manners of contemporary lawyers, affords a strange mixture of sound sense, false rhetoric, and extravagant satire. Godefroy (Prolegom. ad Cod. Theod. c. i. p. 185) supports the historian by similar complaints and authentic facts. In the fourth century many camels might have been laden with law-books. Eunapius in Vit. Ædesii, p. 72.

III. In the system of policy introduced by Augustus, the governors, those at least of the Imperial provinces, were invested with the full powers of the sovereign himself. Ministers of peace and war, the distribution of rewards and punishments depended on them alone, and they successively appeared on their tribunal in the robes of civil magistracy, and in complete armour at the head of the Roman legions.¹²⁴ The influence of the revenue, the authority of law, and the command of a military force, concurred to render their power supreme and absolute; and whenever they were tempted to violate their allegiance, the loyal province which they involved in their rebellion was scarcely sensible of any change in its political state. From the time of Commodus to the reign of Constantine near one hundred governors might be enumerated, who, with various success, erected the standard of revolt; and though the innocent were too often sacrificed, the guilty might be sometimes prevented, by the suspicious cruelty of their master.¹²⁵ To secure his throne and the public tranquillity from these formidable servants, Constantine resolved to divide the military from the civil administration, and to establish, as a permanent and professional distinction, a practice which had been adopted only as an occasional expedient. The supreme jurisdiction exercised by the Prætorian præfects over the armies of the empire was transferred to the two *masters general* whom he instituted, the one for the *cavalry*, the other for the *infantry*; and though each of these *illustrious* officers was more peculiarly responsible for the discipline of those troops which were under his immediate inspection, they both indifferently commanded in the field the several bodies, whether of horse or foot, which were united in the same army.¹²⁶ Their number was soon doubled by the division of the East and West; and as separate generals of the same rank and title were appointed on the four important frontiers of the Rhine, of the Upper and the Lower Danube, and of the Euphrates, the defence of the Roman empire was at length committed to eight masters general of the cavalry and infantry. Under their orders, thirty-five military commanders were stationed in the provinces: three in Britain, six in Gaul, one in Spain, one in Italy, five on the Upper and four on the Lower Danube, in Asia eight, three in Egypt, and four in Africa.

¹²⁴ See a very splendid example in the Life of Agricola, particularly c. 20, 21. The lieutenant of Britain was intrusted with the same powers which Cicero, proconsul of Cilicia, had exercised in the name of the senate and people.

¹²⁵ The Abbé Dubos, who has examined with accuracy (see Hist. de la Monarchie Française, tom. i. p. 41-100, edit. 1742) the institutions of Augustus and of Constantine, observes that, if Otho had been put to death the day before he executed his conspiracy, Otho would now appear in history as innocent as Corbulo.

¹²⁶ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 33] p. 110. Before the end of the reign of Constantius the *magistri militum* were already increased to four. See Valesius ad Ammian. l. xvi. c. 7.

The titles of *counts* and *dukes*,¹²⁷ by which they were properly distinguished, have obtained in modern languages so very different a sense, that the use of them may occasion some surprise. But it should be recollected that the second of those appellations is only a corruption of the Latin word which was indiscriminately applied to any military chief. All these provincial generals were therefore *dukes*; but no more than ten among them were dignified with the rank of *counts* or companions, a title of honour, or rather of favour, which had been recently invented in the court of Constantine. A gold belt was the ensign which distinguished the office of the counts and dukes; and, besides their pay, they received a liberal allowance sufficient to maintain one hundred and ninety servants and one hundred and fifty-eight horses. They were strictly prohibited from interfering in any matter which related to the administration of justice or the revenue; but the command which they exercised over the troops of their department was independent of the authority of the magistrates. About the same time that Constantine gave a legal sanction to the ecclesiastical order, he instituted in the Roman empire the nice balance of the civil and the military powers. The emulation, and sometimes the discord, which reigned between two professions of opposite interests and incompatible manners, was productive of beneficial and of pernicious consequences. It was seldom to be expected that the general and the civil governor of a province should either conspire for the disturbance, or should unite for the service, of their country. While the one delayed to offer the assistance which the other disdained to solicit, the troops very frequently remained without orders or without supplies, the public safety was betrayed, and the defenceless subjects were left exposed to the fury of the barbarians. The divided administration, which had been formed by Constantine, relaxed the vigour of the state, while it secured the tranquillity of the monarch.

The memory of Constantine has been deservedly censured for another innovation which corrupted military discipline, and prepared the ruin of the empire. The nineteen years which preceded his final victory over Licinius had been a period of licence and intestine war. The rivals who contended for the possession of the Roman world had withdrawn the greatest part of their forces from the guard of the general frontier; and the principal cities which formed the boundary of their respective dominions were filled with

¹²⁷ Though the military counts and dukes are frequently mentioned, both in history and the codes, we must have recourse to the *Notitia* for the exact knowledge of their number and stations. For the institution, rank, privileges, &c., of the counts in general, see *Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xii.-xx.* with the commentary of Godefroy.

soldiers, who considered their countrymen as their most implacable enemies. After the use of these internal garrisons had ceased with the civil war, the conqueror wanted either wisdom or firmness to revive the severe discipline of Diocletian, and to suppress a fatal indulgence which habit had endeared and almost confirmed to the military order. From the reign of Constantine a popular and even legal distinction was admitted between the *Palatines*¹²⁸ and the *Borderers*; the troops of the court, as they were improperly styled, and the troops of the frontier. The former, elevated by the superiority of their pay and privileges, were permitted, except in the extraordinary emergencies of war, to occupy their tranquil stations in the heart of the provinces. The most flourishing cities were oppressed by the intolerable weight of quarters. The soldiers insensibly forgot the virtues of their profession, and contracted only the vices of civil life. They were either degraded by the industry of mechanic trades, or enervated by the luxury of baths and theatres. They soon became careless of their martial exercises, curious in their diet and apparel, and, while they inspired terror to the subjects of the empire, they trembled at the hostile approach of the barbarians.¹²⁹ The chain of fortifications which Diocletian and his colleagues had extended along the banks of the great rivers was no longer maintained with the same care, or defended with the same vigilance. The numbers which still remained under the name of the troops of the frontier might be sufficient for the ordinary defence. But their spirit was degraded by the humiliating reflection that *they*, who were exposed to the hardships and dangers of a perpetual warfare, were rewarded only with about two-thirds of the pay and emoluments which were lavished on the troops of the court. Even the bands or legions that were raised the nearest to the level of those unworthy favourites were in some measure disgraced by the title of honour which they were allowed to assume. It was in vain that Constantine repeated the most dreadful menaces of fire and sword against the Borderers who should dare to desert their colours, to connive at the inroads of the barbarians, or to participate in the spoil.¹³⁰ The mischiefs which flow from injudicious counsels are seldom removed by the application of partial severities:

¹²⁸ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 34] p. 111. The distinction between the two classes of Roman troops is very darkly expressed in the historians, the laws, and the Notitia. Consult, however, the copious *paratitlon* or abstract, which Godefroy has drawn up, of the seventh book, de Re Militari, of the Theodosian Code, l. vii. tit. i. leg. 18; l. viii. tit. i. leg. 10.

¹²⁹ *Ferox erat in suos miles et rapax, ignavus vero in hostes et fractus.* Ammian. l. xxii. c. 4. He observes that they loved downy beds and houses of marble, and that their cups were heavier than their swords.

¹³⁰ Cod. Theod. l. vii. tit. i. leg. 1; tit. xii. leg. 1. See Howell's Hist. of the World, vol. ii. p. 19. That learned historian, who is not sufficiently known, labours to justify the character and policy of Constantine.

and though succeeding princes laboured to restore the strength and numbers of the frontier garrisons, the empire, till the last moment of its dissolution, continued to languish under the mortal wound which had been so rashly or so weakly inflicted by the hand of Constantine.

The same timid policy, of dividing whatever is united, of reducing whatever is eminent, of dreading every active power, and of expecting that the most feeble will prove the most obedient, seems to pervade the institutions of several princes, and particularly those of Constantine. The martial pride of the legions, whose victorious camps had so often been the scene of rebellion, was nourished by the memory of their past exploits, and the consciousness of their actual strength. As long as they maintained their ancient establishment of six thousand men, they subsisted, under the reign of Diocletian, each of them singly, a visible and important object in the military history of the Roman empire. A few years afterwards these gigantic bodies were shrunk to a very diminutive size; and when *seven* legions, with some auxiliaries, defended the city of Amida against the Persians, the total garrison, with the inhabitants of both sexes, and the peasants of the deserted country, did not exceed the number of twenty thousand persons.¹³¹ From this fact, and from similar examples, there is reason to believe that the constitution of the legionary troops, to which they partly owed their valour and discipline, was dissolved by Constantine; and that the bands of Roman infantry, which still assumed the same names and the same honours, consisted only of one thousand or fifteen hundred men.¹³² The conspiracy of so many separate detachments, each of which was awed by the sense of its own weakness, could easily be checked; and the successors of Constantine might indulge their love of ostentation, by issuing their orders to one hundred and thirty-two legions, inscribed on the muster-roll of their numerous armies. The remainder of their troops was distributed into several hundred cohorts of infantry, and squadrons of cavalry. Their arms, and titles, and ensigns were calculated to inspire terror, and to display the variety of nations who marched under the Imperial standard. And not a vestige was left of that severe simplicity which, in the ages of freedom and victory, had distinguished the line of battle of a Roman army from the confused host of an Asiatic monarch.¹³³ A more particular enumeration, drawn from the *Notitia*,

¹³¹ Ammian. l. xix. c. 2. He observes (c. 5) that the desperate sallies of two Gallie legions were like a handful of water thrown on a great conflagration.

¹³² Pancirolus ad *Notitiam*, p. 96. *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xiv. p. 491.

¹³³ *Romana acies unius prope formæ erat et hominum et armorum genere.—Regia acies variæ magis multis gentibus dissimilitudine armorum auxiliorumque erat.* T.

might exercise the diligence of an antiquary; but the historian will content himself with observing that the number of permanent stations or garrisons established on the frontiers of the empire amounted to five hundred and eighty-three; and that, under the successors of Constantine, the complete force of the military establishment was computed at six hundred and forty-five thousand soldiers.¹³⁴ An effort so prodigious surpassed the wants of a more ancient and the faculties of a later period.

In the various states of society armies are recruited from very different motives. Barbarians are urged by the love of war; the citizens of a free republic may be prompted by a principle of duty; the subjects, or at least the nobles, of a monarchy are animated by a sentiment of honour; but the timid and luxurious inhabitants of a declining empire must be allured into the service by the hopes of profit, or compelled by the dread of punishment. The resources of the Roman treasury were exhausted by the increase of pay, by the repetition of donatives, and by the invention of new emoluments and indulgences, which, in the opinion of the provincial youth, might compensate the hardships and dangers of a military life. Yet, although the stature was lowered,¹³⁵ although slaves, at least by a tacit connivance, were indiscriminately received into the ranks, the insurmountable difficulty of procuring a regular and adequate supply of volunteers obliged the emperors to adopt more effectual and coercive methods. The lands bestowed on the veterans, as the free reward of their valour, were henceforwards granted under a condition which contains the first rudiments of the feudal tenures—that their sons, who succeeded to the inheritance, should devote themselves to the profession of arms as soon as they attained the age of manhood; and their cowardly refusal was punished by the loss of honour, of fortune, or even of life.¹³⁶ But as the annual growth of the sons of the veterans bore a very small proportion to the demands of the service, levies of men were frequently required from the pro-

Liv. l. xxxvii. c. 39, 40. Flaminius [Flamininus], even before the event, had compared the army of Antiochus to a supper in which the flesh of one vile animal was diversified by the skill of the cooks. See the Life of Flaminius [Flamininus] in Plutarch.

¹³⁴ Agathias, l. v. p. 157, edit. Louvre [c. 13, p. 305, ed. Bonn].

¹³⁵ Valentinian (Cod. Theodos. l. vii. tit. xiii. leg. 3) fixes the standard at five feet seven inches, about five feet four inches and a half English measure. It had formerly been five feet ten inches, and in the best corps six Roman feet. Sed tunc erat amplior multitudo, et plures militiam sequebantur armatam. Vegetius de Re Militari, l. i. c. 5.

¹³⁶ See the two titles, De Veteranis and De Filiis Veteranorum [tit. xx. xxii.], in the seventh book of the Theodosian Code. The age at which their military service was required varied from twenty-five to sixteen. If the sons of the veterans appeared with a horse, they had a right to serve in the cavalry; two horses gave them some valuable privileges.

vinces, and every proprietor was obliged either to take up arms, or to procure a substitute, or to purchase his exemption by the payment of a heavy fine.^a The sum of forty-two pieces of gold, to which it was reduced, ascertains the exorbitant price of volunteers, and the reluctance with which the government admitted of this alternative.¹³⁷ Such was the horror for the profession of a soldier which had affected the minds of the degenerate Romans, that many of the youth of Italy and the provinces chose to cut off the fingers of their right hand to escape from being pressed into the service; and this strange expedient was so commonly practised as to deserve the severe animadversion of the laws,¹³⁸ and a peculiar name in the Latin language.¹³⁹

The introduction of barbarians into the Roman armies became every day more universal, more necessary, and more fatal. The most daring of the Scythians, of the Goths, and of the Germans, who delighted in war, and who found it more profitable to defend than to ravage the provinces, were enrolled not only in the auxiliaries of their respective nations, but in the legions themselves, and among the most distinguished of the Palatine troops. As they freely mingled with the subjects of the empire, they gradually learned to despise their manners and to imitate their arts. They abjured the implicit reverence which the pride of Rome had exacted from

Increase of
barbarian
auxiliaries.

¹³⁷ Cod. Theod. l. vii. tit. xiii. leg. 7. According to the historian Socrates (see Godefroy ad loc.), the same emperor Valens sometimes required eighty pieces of gold for a recruit. In the following law it is faintly expressed that slaves shall not be admitted inter optimas lectissimorum militum turmas.

¹³⁸ The person and property of a Roman knight, who had mutilated his two sons, were sold at public auction by order of Augustus. (Sueton, in August. c. 24.) The moderation of that artful usurper proves that this example of severity was justified by the spirit of the times. Ammianus makes a distinction between the effeminate Italians and the hardy Gauls (l. xv. c. 12). Yet only fifteen years afterwards, Valentinian, in a law addressed to the prefect of Gaul, is obliged to enact that these cowardly deserters shall be burnt alive. (Cod. Theod. l. vii. tit. xiii. leg. 5.) Their numbers in Illyricum were so considerable that the province complained of a scarcity of recruits. (Id. leg. 10.)

¹³⁹ They were called *Murci*. *Murculus* is found in Plautus and Festus to denote a lazy and cowardly person, who, according to Arnobius and Augustin, was under the immediate protection of the goddess *Murcia*. From this particular instance of cowardice *murcare* is used as synonymous to *mutilare* by the writers of the middle Latinity. See Lindenbrogius and Valesius ad Ammian. Marcellin. l. xv. c. 12.

^a Mr. Finlay points out that these views of Gibbon require to be modified. "The necessity of preventing the possibility of a falling off in the revenue was, in the eyes of the imperial court, of as much consequence as the maintenance of the efficiency of the army. Proprietors of land, and citizens of wealth, were not allowed to enrol themselves as soldiers, lest they should escape from paying their taxes; and only those plebeians and peasants who were not liable to the land-tax were

received as warriors. It was the duty of the poor to serve in person, and of the rich to supply the revenues of the state. The effect of this was that the Roman forces were often recruited with slaves, in spite of the laws frequently passed to prohibit this abuse; and, not long after the time of Constantine, slaves were often admitted to enter the army on receiving their freedom." Finlay, Greece under the Romans, p. 131; History of the Byzantine Empire, p. 33.—S.

their ignorance, while they acquired the knowledge and possession of those advantages by which alone she supported her declining greatness. The barbarian soldiers who displayed any military talents were advanced, without exception, to the most important commands; and the names of the tribunes, of the counts and dukes, and of the generals themselves, betray a foreign origin, which they no longer condescended to disguise. They were often intrusted with the conduct of a war against their countrymen; and though most of them preferred the ties of allegiance to those of blood, they did not always avoid the guilt, or at least the suspicion, of holding a treasonable correspondence with the enemy, of inviting his invasion, or of sparing his retreat. The camps and the palace of the son of Constantine were governed by the powerful faction of the Franks, who preserved the strictest connexion with each other and with their country, and who resented every personal affront as a national indignity.¹⁴⁰ When the tyrant Caligula was suspected of an intention to invest a very extraordinary candidate with the consular robes, the sacrilegious profanation would have scarcely excited less astonishment if, instead of a horse, the noblest chieftain of Germany or Britain had been the object of his choice. The revolution of three centuries had produced so remarkable a change in the prejudices of the people, that, with the public approbation, Constantine showed his successors the example of bestowing the honours of the consulship on the barbarians who, by their merit and services, had deserved to be ranked among the first of the Romans.¹⁴¹ But as these hardy veterans, who had been educated in the ignorance or contempt of the laws, were incapable of exercising any civil offices, the powers of the human mind were contracted by the irreconcilable separation of talents as well as of professions. The accomplished citizens of the Greek and Roman republics, whose characters could adapt themselves to the bar, the senate, the camp, or the schools, had learned to write, to speak, and to act with the same spirit, and with equal abilities.

IV. Besides the magistrates and generals, who at a distance from the court diffused their delegated authority over the provinces and armies, the emperor conferred the rank of ^{Seven} ^{ministers of} the palace.

Illustrious on seven of his more immediate servants, to whose fidelity he intrusted his safety, or his counsels, or his treasures. 1. The

¹⁴⁰ Malarichus—adhibitis Francis quorum ea tempestate in palatio multitudo florebat, erectius jam loquebatur tumultuabaturque. Ammian. l. xv. c. 5.

¹⁴¹ Barbaros omnium primus, ad usque fasces auxerat et trabeas consulares. Ammian. l. xxi. c. 10. Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 7) and Aurelius Victor seem to confirm the truth of this assertion; yet in the thirty-two consular Fasti of the reign of Constantine I cannot discover the name of a single barbarian. I should therefore interpret the liberality of that prince as relative to the ornaments, rather than to the office, of the consulship.

private apartments of the palace were governed by a favourite eunuch, who, in the language of that age, was styled the *præpositus*, ^{The} or præfect of the sacred bedchamber. His duty was to attend the emperor in his hours of state or in those of amusement, and to perform about his person all those menial services which can only derive their splendour from the influence of royalty. Under a prince who deserved to reign, the great chamberlain (for such we may call him) was an useful and humble domestic; but an artful domestic, who improves every occasion of unguarded confidence, will insensibly acquire over a feeble mind that ascendant which harsh wisdom and uncomplying virtue can seldom obtain. The degenerate grandsons of Theodosius, who were invisible to their subjects, and contemptible to their enemies, exalted the præfects of their bedchamber above the heads of all the ministers of the palace; ¹⁴² and even his deputy, the first of the splendid train of slaves who waited in the presence, was thought worthy to rank before the *respectable* proconsuls of Greece or Asia. The jurisdiction of the chamberlain was acknowledged by the *counts*, or superintendents, who regulated the two important provinces of the magnificence of the wardrobe, and of the luxury of the Imperial table. ¹⁴³ 2. The principal administration of public affairs was committed to the diligence and abilities of the *master of the offices*. ¹⁴⁴ He was the supreme magistrate of the palace, inspected the discipline of the civil and military *schools*, and received appeals from all parts of the empire, in the causes which related to that numerous army of privileged persons who, as the servants of the court, had obtained for themselves and families a right to decline the authority of the ordinary judges. The correspondence between the prince and his subjects was managed by the four *serinia*, or offices of this minister of state. The first was appropriated to memorials, the second to epistles, the third to petitions, and the fourth to papers and orders of a miscellaneous kind. Each of these was directed by an inferior *master of respectable* dignity, and the whole business was despatched by an hundred and forty-eight secretaries, chosen for the most part from the profession of the law, on account of the variety of abstracts of reports and references which frequently occurred in the

¹⁴² Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. 8.

¹⁴³ By a very singular metaphor, borrowed from the military character of the first emperors, the steward of their household was styled the count of their camp (*comes castrensis*). Cassiodorus very seriously represents to him that his own fame, and that of the empire, must depend on the opinion which foreign ambassadors may conceive of the plenty and magnificence of the royal table. (*Variar. l. vi. epistol. 9.*)

¹⁴⁴ Gutherius (*de Officiis Domus Augustæ*, l. ii. c. 20, l. iii.) has very accurately explained the functions of the master of the offices, and the constitution of the subordinate *serinia*. But he vainly attempts, on the most doubtful authority, to deduce from the time of the Antonines, or even of Nero, the origin of a magistrate who cannot be found in history before the reign of Constantine.

exercise of their several functions. From a condescension which in former ages would have been esteemed unworthy of the Roman majesty, a particular secretary was allowed for the Greek language; and interpreters were appointed to receive the ambassadors of the barbarians; but the department of foreign affairs, which constitutes so essential a part of modern policy, seldom diverted the attention of the master of the offices. His mind was more seriously engaged by the general direction of the posts and arsenals of the empire. There were thirty-four cities, fifteen in the East and nineteen in the West, in which regular companies of workmen were perpetually employed in fabricating defensive armour, offensive weapons of all sorts, and military engines, which were deposited in the arsenals, and occasionally delivered for the service of the troops. 3. In the course of nine centuries the office of *quæstor* had experienced ^{The quæstor.} a very singular revolution. In the infancy of Rome, two inferior magistrates were annually elected by the people, to relieve the consuls from the invidious management of the public treasure;¹⁴⁵ a similar assistant was granted to every proconsul and to every prætor who exercised a military or provincial command; with the extent of conquest, the two quæstors were gradually multiplied to the number of four, of eight, of twenty, and for a short time, perhaps, of forty;¹⁴⁶ and the noblest citizens ambitiously solicited an office which gave them a seat in the senate, and a just hope of obtaining the honours of the republic. Whilst Augustus affected to maintain the freedom of election, he consented to accept the annual privilege of recommending, or rather indeed of nominating, a certain proportion of candidates; and it was his custom to select one of these distinguished youths to read his orations or epistles in the assemblies of the senate.¹⁴⁷ The practice of Augustus was imitated by succeeding princes; the occasional commission was established as a permanent office; and the favoured quæstor, assuming a new and more illustrious

¹⁴⁵ Tacitus (Annal. xi. 22) says that the first quæstors were elected by the people sixty-four years after the foundation of the republic; but he is of opinion that they had, long before that period, been annually appointed by the consuls, and even by the kings. But this obscure point of antiquity is contested by other writers.^a

¹⁴⁶ Tacitus (Annal. xi. 22) seems to consider twenty as the highest number of quæstors; and Dion (l. xliii. [c. 47] p. 374) insinuates that, if the dictator Cæsar once created forty, it was only to facilitate the payment of an immense debt of gratitude. Yet the augmentation which he made of prætors subsisted under the succeeding reigns.

¹⁴⁷ Sueton, in August. c. 65, and Torrent. ad loc. Dion Cas. p. 755.

^a Niebuhr and other writers have endeavoured to reconcile these conflicting statements by showing that there were, in the early times of the republic, two different classes of officers bearing this name, one called *Quæstores parricidii*, who were public accusers, and the other called

Quæstores classici, the financial officers; of whom the former existed at Rome during the kingly period, while the latter were not appointed till the time of the republic. See Smith's Dict. of Greek and Rom Antiq. p. 980, 2nd ed.—S.

character, alone survived the suppression of his ancient and useless colleagues.¹⁴⁸ As the orations which he composed in the name of the emperor¹⁴⁹ acquired the force, and at length the form, of absolute edicts, he was considered as the representative of the legislative power, the oracle of the council, and the original source of the civil jurisprudence. He was sometimes invited to take his seat in the supreme judicature of the Imperial consistory, with the Prætorian præfects and the master of the offices; and he was frequently requested to resolve the doubts of inferior judges: but as he was not oppressed with a variety of subordinate business, his leisure and talents were employed to cultivate that dignified style of eloquence which, in the corruption of taste and language, still preserves the majesty of the Roman laws.¹⁵⁰ In some respects the office of the Imperial quæstor may be compared with that of a modern chancellor; but the use of the great seal, which seems to have been adopted by the illiterate barbarians, was never introduced to attest the public acts of the emperors.^a 4. The extraordinary title of *count of the sacred largesses* was bestowed on the treasurer-general of the revenue, with the intention perhaps of inculcating that every payment flowed from the voluntary bounty of the monarch. To conceive the almost infinite detail of the annual and daily expense of the civil and military administration in every part of a great empire would exceed the powers of the most vigorous imagination. The actual account

the public
treasurer.

¹⁴⁸ The youth and inexperience of the quæstors, who entered on that important office in their twenty-fifth year (Lips. Excurs. ad Tacit. l. iii. D.), engaged Augustus to remove them from the management of the treasury; and though they were restored by Claudius, they seem to have been finally dismissed by Nero. (Tacit. Annal. xiii. 9. Sueton. in Aug. c. 38, in Claud. c. 24. Dion, p. 696 [l. liii. c. 2], 961 [l. lx. c. 24], &c. Plin. Epistol. x. 20, et alibi.) In the provinces of the Imperial division, the place of the quæstors was more ably supplied by the *procurators* (Dion Cas. p. 707 [l. liii. c. 15]; Tacit. in Vit. Agric. c. 15); or, as they were afterwards called, *rationales*. (Hist. August. p. 130 [Lamprid. Alex. Sever. cc. 45, 46].) But in the provinces of the senate we may still discover a series of quæstors till the reign of Marcus Antoninus (See the Inscriptions of Gruter, the Epistles of Pliny, and a decisive fact in the Augustan History, p. 64 [Spartian. Sever. c. 2].) From Ulpian we may learn (Pandect. l. i. tit. 13) that, under the government of the House of Severus, their provincial administration was abolished; and in the subsequent troubles the annual or triennial elections of quæstors must have naturally ceased.

¹⁴⁹ Cum patris nomine et epistolas ipse dictaret, et edicta conscriberet, orationesque in senatu recitaret, etiam quæstoris vice. Sueton. in Tit. c. 6. The office must have acquired new dignity, which was occasionally executed by the heir apparent of the empire. Trajan intrusted the same care to Hadrian, his quæstor and cousin. See Dodwell, Prælection. Cambden. x. xi. p. 362-394.

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——— Terris edicta daturus,
Supplicibus responsa, venis. Oracula regis
Eloquio crevere tuo; nec dignius unquam
Majestas meminit sese Romana locutam.

Claudian in Consulatu, Mall. Theodor. 33. See likewise Symmachus (Epistol. i. 17) and Cassiodorus (Variar. vi. 5).

^a The duties and functions of the Imperial quæstor are fully described by Böcking, Notitia Dignitatum, vol. i. p. 247, seq., vol. ii. p. 324, seq.—3.

employed several hundred persons, distributed into eleven different offices, which were artfully contrived to examine and control their respective operations. The multitude of these agents had a natural tendency to increase; and it was more than once thought expedient to dismiss to their native homes the useless supernumeraries, who, deserting their honest labours, had pressed with too much eagerness into the lucrative profession of the finances.¹⁵¹ Twenty-nine provincial receivers, of whom eighteen were honoured with the title of count, corresponded with the treasurer; and he extended his jurisdiction over the mines from whence the precious metals were extracted, over the mints, in which they were converted into the current coin, and over the public treasuries of the most important cities, where they were deposited for the service of the state. The foreign trade of the empire was regulated by this minister, who directed likewise all the linen and woollen manufactures, in which the successive operations of spinning, weaving, and dyeing were executed, chiefly by women of a servile condition, for the use of the palace and army. Twenty-six of these institutions are enumerated in the West, where the arts had been more recently introduced, and a still larger proportion may be allowed for the industrious provinces of the East.¹⁵² 5. Besides the public revenue, which an ab-

The private treasurer.

absolute monarch might levy and expend according to his pleasure, the emperors, in the capacity of opulent citizens, possessed a very extensive property, which was administered by the *count* or treasurer of the *private estate*. Some part had perhaps been the ancient demesnes of kings and republics; some accessions might be derived from the families which were successively invested with the purple; but the most considerable portion flowed from the impure source of confiscations and forfeitures. The Imperial estates were scattered through the provinces from Mauritania to Britain; but the rich and fertile soil of Cappadocia tempted the monarch to acquire in that country his fairest possessions,¹⁵³ and either Constantine or his successors embraced the occasion of justifying avarice by religious zeal. They suppressed the rich temple of Comana, where the high-priest of the goddess of war supported the dignity of a sovereign prince; and they applied to their private use the consecrated lands, which were

¹⁵¹ Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. 30. Cod. Justinian. l. xii. tit. 24.

¹⁵² In the departments of the two counts of the treasury the eastern part of the *Notitia* happens to be very defective. It may be observed that we had a treasury chest in London, and a gynceum or manufacture at Winchester. But Britain was not thought worthy either of a mint or of an arsenal. Gaul alone possessed three of the former and eight of the latter.

¹⁵³ Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xxx. leg. 2; and Godefroy ad loc.

inhabited by six thousand subjects or slaves of the deity and her ministers.¹⁵⁴ But these were not the valuable inhabitants: the plains that stretch from the foot of Mount Argæus to the banks of the Sarus bred a generous race of horses, renowned above all others in the ancient world for their majestic shape and incomparable swiftness. These *sacred* animals, destined for the service of the palace and the Imperial games, were protected by the laws from the profanation of a vulgar master.¹⁵⁵ The demesnes of Cappadocia were important enough to require the inspection of a *count*; ¹⁵⁶ officers of an inferior rank were stationed in the other parts of the empire; and the deputies of the private, as well as those of the public treasurer, were maintained in the exercise of their independent functions, and encouraged to control the authority of the provincial magistrates.¹⁵⁷ 6, 7. The chosen hands of cavalry and infantry, which guarded the person of the emperor, were under the immediate command of the *two counts of the domestics*. The whole number consisted of three thousand five hundred men, divided into seven *schools*, or troops, of five hundred each; and in the East this honourable service was almost entirely appropriated to the Armenians. Whenever, on public ceremonies, they were drawn up in the courts and porticos of the palace, their lofty stature, silent order, and splendid arms of silver and gold, displayed a martial pomp not unworthy of the Roman majesty.¹⁵⁸ From the seven schools two companies of horse and foot were selected, of the *protectors*, whose advantageous station was the hope and reward of the most deserving soldiers. They mounted guard in the interior apartments, and were occasionally despatched into the provinces, to execute with celerity and vigour the orders of their master.¹⁵⁹ The counts of the domestics had succeeded to the office of the Prætorian præfects; like the præfects, they aspired from the service of the palace to the command of armies.

¹⁵⁴ Strabon. Geograph. l. xii. p. 809 [p. 535, edit. Casaub.]. The other temple of Comana, in Pontus, was a colony from that of Cappadocia, l. xii. p. 835 [p. 557, ed. Casaub.]. The president Des Brosses (see his *Saluste*, tom. ii. p. 21) conjectures that the deity adored in both Comanas was Beltis, the Venus of the East, the goddess of generation; a very different being indeed from the goddess of war.

¹⁵⁵ Cod. Theod. l. x. tit. vi. de Grege Dominico. Godefroy has collected every circumstance of antiquity relative to the Cappadocian horses. One of the finest breeds, the Palmatian, was the forfeiture of a rebel, whose estate lay about sixteen miles from Tyana, near the great road between Constantinople and Antioch.

¹⁵⁶ Justinian (Novell. 30) subjected the province of the count of Cappadocia to the immediate authority of the favourite eunuch, who presided over the sacred bedchamber.

¹⁵⁷ Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xxx. leg. 4, &c.

¹⁵⁸ Pancirolus, p. 102, 136. The appearance of these military domestics is described in the Latin poem of Corippus, *De Laudibus Justin.* l. iii. 157-179, p. 419, 420 of the *Appendix Hist. Byzantin.* Rom. 1777.

¹⁵⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, who served so many years, obtained only the rank of a protector. The first ten among these honourable soldiers were *Clarissimi*.

The perpetual intercourse between the court and the provinces was facilitated by the construction of roads and the institution of posts. But these beneficial establishments were Agents or official spies. accidentally connected with a pernicious and intolerable abuse. Two or three hundred *agents* or messengers were employed, under the jurisdiction of the master of the offices, to announce the names of the annual consuls, and the edicts or victories of the emperors. They insensibly assumed the licence of reporting whatever they could observe of the conduct either of magistrates or of private citizens; and were soon considered as the eyes of the monarch¹⁶⁰ and the scourge of the people. Under the warm influence of a feeble reign they multiplied to the incredible number of ten thousand, disdained the mild though frequent admonitions of the laws, and exercised in the profitable management of the posts a rapacious and insolent oppression. These official spies, who regularly corresponded with the palace, were encouraged, by favour and reward, anxiously to watch the progress of every treasonable design, from the faint and latent symptoms of disaffection, to the actual preparation of an open revolt. Their careless or criminal violation of truth and justice was covered by the consecrated mask of zeal; and they might securely aim their poisoned arrows at the breast either of the guilty or the innocent, who had provoked their resentment, or refused to purchase their silence. A faithful subject, of Syria perhaps, or of Britain, was exposed to the danger, or at least to the dread, of being dragged in chains to the court of Milan or Constantinople, to defend his life and fortune against the malicious charge of these privileged informers. The ordinary administration was conducted by those methods which extreme necessity can alone palliate; and the defects of evidence were diligently supplied by the use of torture.¹⁶¹

The deceitful and dangerous experiment of the criminal *question*, as it is emphatically styled, was admitted, rather than approved, in the jurisprudence of the Romans. They applied Use of torture. this sanguinary mode of examination only to servile bodies, whose sufferings were seldom weighed by those haughty republicans in the scale of justice or humanity; but they would never consent to violate the sacred person of a citizen till they possessed the clearest evidence of his guilt.¹⁶² The annals of tyranny, from the reign of Tiberius

¹⁶⁰ Xenophon, *Cyropæd.* l. viii. [c. 2, §§ 10, 11.] Brisson, de Regno Persico, l. i. N°. 190, p. 264. The emperors adopted with pleasure this Persian metaphor.

¹⁶¹ For the *Agentes in Rebus*, see Ammian. l. xv. c. 3, l. xvi. c. 5, l. xxii. c. 7, with the curious annotations of Valesius. Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xxvii. xxviii. xxix. Among the passages collected in the Commentary of Godefroy, the most remarkable is one from Libanius, in his discourse concerning the death of Julian.

¹⁶² The Pandects (l. xlviii. tit. xviii.) contain the sentiments of the most celebrated civilians on the subject of torture. They strictly confine it to slaves; and Ulpian

to that of Domitian, circumstantially relate the executions of many innocent victims; but, as long as the faintest remembrance was kept alive of the national freedom and honour, the last hours of a Roman were secure from the danger of ignominious torture.¹⁶³ The conduct of the provincial magistrates was not, however, regulated by the practice of the city, or the strict maxims of the civilians. They found the use of torture established not only among the slaves of oriental despotism, but among the Macedonians, who obeyed a limited monarch; among the Rhodians, who flourished by the liberty of commerce; and even among the sage Athenians, who had asserted and adorned the dignity of human kind.¹⁶⁴ The acquiescence of the provincials encouraged their governors to acquire, or perhaps to usurp, a discretionary power of employing the rack, to extort from vagrants or plebeian criminals the confession of their guilt, till they insensibly proceeded to confound the distinctions of rank, and to disregard the privileges of Roman citizens. The apprehensions of the subjects urged them to solicit, and the interest of the sovereign engaged him to grant, a variety of special exemptions, which tacitly allowed, and even authorised, the general use of torture. They protected all persons of illustrious or honourable rank, bishops and their presbyters, professors of the liberal arts, soldiers and their families, municipal officers, and their posterity to the third generation, and all children under the age of puberty.¹⁶⁵ But a fatal maxim was introduced into the new jurisprudence of the empire, that in the case of treason, which included every offence that the subtlety of lawyers could derive from an *hostile intention* towards the prince or republic,¹⁶⁶ all privileges were suspended, and all conditions were reduced to the same ignominious level. As the safety of the emperor was avowedly preferred to every consideration of justice or humanity, the dignity of

himself is ready to acknowledge that *Res est fragilis, et periculosa, et quæ veritatem fallat.* [§ 23.]

¹⁶³ In the conspiracy of Piso against Nero, Epicharis (libertina mulier) was the only person tortured; the rest were *intacti tormentis*. It would be superfluous to add a weaker, and it would be difficult to find a stronger, example. Tacit. Annal. xv. 57.

¹⁶⁴ Dicendum . . . de institutis Atheniensium, Rhodiorum, doctissimorum hominum, apud quos etiam (id quod acerbissimum est) liberi, civesque torquentur. Cicero, Partit. Orat. c. 34. We may learn from the trial of Philotas the practice of the Macedonians. (Diodor. Sicul. l. xvii. [c. 80] p. 604. Q. Curt. l. vi. c. 11.)^a

¹⁶⁵ Heineccius (Element. Jur. Civ. part vii. p. 81) has collected these exemptions into one view.

¹⁶⁶ This definition of the sage Ulpian (Pandect. l. xlviii. tit. iv.) seems to have been adapted to the court of Caracalla, rather than to that of Alexander Severus. See the Codes of Theodosius and Justinian ad leg. Julianam majestatis.

^a Notwithstanding the express statement of Cicero, this is not true as far as regards the Athenians. There was a law at Athens ordaining that no free Athenian

should be put to the torture. See Smith's Dict. of Greek and Rom. Antiq. p. 1139. —S.

age and the tenderness of youth were alike exposed to the most cruel tortures; and the terrors of a malicious information, which might select them as the accomplices, or even as the witnesses, perhaps, of an imaginary crime, perpetually hung over the heads of the principal citizens of the Roman world.¹⁶⁷

These evils, however terrible they may appear, were confined to the smaller number of Roman subjects whose dangerous situation was in some degree compensated by the enjoyment of those advantages, either of nature or of fortune, which exposed them to the jealousy of the monarch. The obscure millions of a great empire have much less to dread from the cruelty than from the avarice of their masters; and *their* humble happiness is principally affected by the grievance of excessive taxes, which, gently pressing on the wealthy, descend with accelerated weight on the meaner and more indigent classes of society. An ingenious philosopher¹⁶⁸ has calculated the universal measure of the public impositions by the degrees of freedom and servitude; and ventures to assert that, according to an invariable law of nature, it must always increase with the former, and diminish in a just proportion to the latter. But this reflection, which would tend to alleviate the miseries of despotism, is contradicted at least by the history of the Roman empire; which accuses the same princes of despoiling the senate of its authority, and the provinces of their wealth. Without abolishing all the various customs and duties on merchandises, which are imperceptibly discharged by the apparent choice of the purchaser, the policy of Constantine and his successors preferred a simple and direct mode of taxation, more congenial to the spirit of an arbitrary government.¹⁶⁹

Finances.

The name and use of the *indictions*,¹⁷⁰ which serve to ascertain

¹⁶⁷ Arcadius Charisius is the oldest lawyer quoted in the Pandects to justify the universal practice of torture in all cases of treason; but this maxim of tyranny, which is admitted by Ammianus (l. xix. c. 12) with the most respectful terror, is enforced by several laws of the successors of Constantine. See Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. xxxv. In majestatis crimine omnibus æqua est conditio. [leg. 1.]

¹⁶⁸ Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, l. xii. c. 13.

¹⁶⁹ Mr. Hume (*Essays*, vol. i. p. 389) has seen this important truth with some degree of perplexity.

¹⁷⁰ The cycle of indictions, which may be traced as high as the reign of Constantius, or perhaps of his father Constantine, is still employed by the Papal court: but the commencement of the year has been very reasonably altered to the first of January. See *l'Art de vérifier les Dates*, p. xi.; and *Dictionnaire Raison. de la Diplomatie*, tom. ii. p. 25; two accurate treatises, which come from the workshop of the Benedictines.^a

^a The indictions as a chronological era begin September 1, A.D. 312. See Clinton, *Fasti Rom.* vol. i. p. 364. The way in which the indiction was used as a chronological era in the time of Constantine, and long afterwards, deserves notice. From September 1, A.D. 312, successive

periods of fifteen years were reckoned. When an indiction is mentioned, it is quite uncertain which of these periods of fifteen years is meant, and it is only the number of a particular year occurring in the period that is expressed. This separate year, and not the period of fifteen

the chronology of the middle ages, was derived from the regular practice of the Roman tributes.¹⁷¹ The emperor subscribed with his own hand, and in purple ink, the solemn edict, or indiction, which was fixed up in the principal city of each diocese during two months previous to the first day of September. And, by a very easy connection of ideas, the word *indiction* was transferred to the measure of tribute which it prescribed, and to the annual term which it allowed for the payment. This general estimate of the supplies was proportioned to the real and imaginary wants of the state; but as often as the expense exceeded the revenue, or the revenue fell short of the computation, an additional tax, under the name of *superindiction*, was imposed on the people, and the most valuable attribute of sovereignty was communicated to the Prætorian præfects, who, on some occasions, were permitted to provide for the unforeseen and extraordinary exigencies of the public service. The execution of these laws (which it would be tedious to pursue in their minute and intricate detail) consisted of two distinct operations: the resolving the general imposition into its constituent parts, which were assessed on the provinces, the cities, and the individuals of the Roman world; and the collecting the separate contributions of the individuals, the cities, and the provinces, till the accumulated sums were poured into the Imperial treasuries. But as the account between the monarch and the subject was perpetually open, and as the renewal of the demand anticipated the perfect discharge of the preceding obligation, the weighty machine of the finances was moved by the same hands round the circle of its yearly revolution. Whatever was honourable or important in the administration of the revenue was committed to the wisdom of the præfects and their provincial representatives; the lucrative functions were claimed by a crowd of subordinate officers, some of whom depended on the treasurer, others on the governor of the province; and who, in the inevitable conflicts of a perplexed jurisdiction, had frequent opportunities of disputing with each other the spoils of the people. The laborious offices, which

¹⁷¹ The first twenty-eight titles of the eleventh book of the Theodosian Code are filled with the circumstantial regulations on the important subject of tributes; but they suppose a clearer knowledge of fundamental principles than it is at present in our power to attain.

years, is called an indiction. Thus, when the seventh indiction occurs in a document, this document belongs to the seventh year of one of those periods of fifteen years, but to which of them is uncertain. This continued to be the usage of the word till the twelfth century, when it became the practice to call the period of fifteen years the indiction, and to reckon

from the birth of Christ the number of indictions, that is, periods of fifteen years. An event was then said to take place in a particular year of a particular indiction; for example, Indictionis LXXIX., anno V. Savigny, Ueber die Römische Steuer-
verfassung, in Vermischte Schriften, vul. ii. p. 130.—S.

could be productive only of envy and reproach, of expense and danger, were imposed on the *Decurions*, who formed the corporations of the cities, and whom the severity of the Imperial laws had condemned to sustain the burthens of civil society.¹⁷² The whole landed property of the empire (without excepting the patrimonial estates of the monarch) was the object of ordinary taxation; and every new purchaser contracted the obligations of the former proprietor. An accurate *census*,¹⁷³ or survey, was the only equitable mode of ascertaining the proportion which every citizen should be obliged to contribute for the public service; and from the well-known period of the indications, there is reason to believe that this difficult and expensive operation was repeated at the regular distance of fifteen years. The lands were measured by surveyors, who were sent into the provinces; their nature, whether arable or pasture, or vineyards or woods, was distinctly reported; and an estimate was made of their common value from the average produce of five years. The numbers of slaves and of cattle constituted an essential part of the report; an oath was administered to the proprietors which bound them to disclose the true state of their affairs; and their attempts to prevaricate, or elude the intention of the legislator, were severely watched, and punished as a capital crime, which included the double guilt of treason and sacrilege.¹⁷⁴ A large portion of the tribute was paid in money; and of the current coin of the empire, gold alone could be legally

¹⁷² The title concerning the Decurions (l. xii. tit. i.) is the most ample in the whole Theodosian Code; since it contains not less than one hundred and ninety-two distinct laws to ascertain the duties and privileges of that useful order of citizens.*

¹⁷³ *Habemus enim et hominum numerum qui delati sunt, et agrorum modum.* Eumenius in Panegy. Vet. viii. [vii.] 6. See Cod. Theod. l. xiii. tit. x. xi. with Godefroy's Commentary.

¹⁷⁴ *Siquis sacrilegâ vitem false succiderit; aut feracium ramorum fœtus hebetaverit, quo declinet fidem Censuum, et mentiaturs callide paupertatis ingenium, mox detectus capitale subibit exitium, et bona ejus in Fisci jura migrabunt.* Cod. Theod. l. xiii. tit. xi. leg. 1. Although this law is not without its studied obscurity, it is, however, clear enough to prove the minuteness of the inquisition, and the disproportion of the penalty.

* The *Decuriones*, also called *Curiales*, were the members of the senate in the municipal towns. This senate was called *Ordo Decurionum*, subsequently *Ordos* simply, and sometimes also *Curia*. In the times of the republic admission into the *Ordo Decurionum* was considered an honour; but under the despotism of the empire the position of the Decurions was most lamentable, as we see from the Theodosian Code. The plebeians carefully avoided this dangerous distinction, and the Decurions themselves sought to escape from it in every possible way. Many became soldiers and even slaves in order to con-

ceal themselves, but they were sought after and dragged back to the Curia. Their miserable condition arose from the oppression of the government. For the Decurions had not simply to collect the taxes, but they were responsible for their colleagues; they had to take up the lands abandoned by the proprietors on account of the intolerable weight of taxes attached to them; and they had finally to make up all deficiencies in the taxes out of their own private resources. Savigny, *Geschichte des Römischen Rechts*, vol. i. p. 40, seq., 2nd ed.—S.

accepted.¹⁷⁵ The remainder of the taxes, according to the proportions determined by the annual indiction, was furnished in a manner still more direct, and still more oppressive. According to the different nature of lands, their real produce in the various articles of wine or oil, corn or barley, wood or iron, was transported by the labour or at the expense of the provincials to the Imperial magazines, from whence they were occasionally distributed, for the use of the court, of the army, and of the two capitals, Rome and Constantinople. The commissioners of the revenue were so frequently obliged to make considerable purchases, that they were strictly prohibited from allowing any compensation, or from receiving in money the value of those supplies which were exacted in kind. In the primitive simplicity of small communities this method may be well adapted to collect the almost voluntary offerings of the people; but it is at once susceptible of the utmost latitude and of the utmost strictness, which in a corrupt and absolute monarchy must introduce a perpetual contest between the power of oppression and the arts of fraud.¹⁷⁶ The agriculture of the Roman provinces was insensibly ruined, and, in the progress of despotism, which tends to disappoint its own purpose, the emperors were obliged to derive some merit from the forgiveness of debts, or the remission of tributes, which their subjects were utterly incapable of paying. According to the new division of Italy, the fertile and happy province of Campania, the scene of the early victories and of the delicious retirements of the citizens of Rome, extended between the sea and the Apennine from the Tiber to the Silarus. Within sixty years after the death of Constantine, and on the evidence of an actual survey, an exemption was granted in favour of three hundred and thirty thousand English acres of desert and uncultivated land, which amounted to one-eighth of the whole surface of the province. As the footsteps of the barbarians had not yet been seen in Italy, the cause of this amazing desolation, which is recorded in the laws, can be ascribed only to the administration of the Roman emperors.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ The astonishment of Pliny would have ceased. *Equidem miror P. R. victis gentibus [in tributo] semper argentum imperitasse, non aurum.* *Hist. Natur.* xxxiii. 15.

¹⁷⁶ Some precautions were taken (see *Cod. Theod.* l. xi. tit. ii. and *Cod. Justinian.* l. x. tit. xxvii. leg. 1, 2, 3) to restrain the magistrates from the abuse of their authority, either in the exaction or in the purchase of corn: but those who had learning enough to read the orations of Cicero against Verres (iii. de *Frumento*) might instruct themselves in all the various arts of oppression, with regard to the weight, the price, the quality, and the carriage. The avarice of an unlettered governor would supply the ignorance of precept or precedent.

¹⁷⁷ *Cod. Theod.* l. xi. tit. xxviii. leg. 2, published the 24th of March, A.D. 395, by the emperor Honorius, only two months after the death of his father Theodosius. He speaks of 528,042 Roman jugera, which I have reduced to the English measure. The jugerum contained 28,800 square Roman feet.

Either from design or from accident, the mode of assessment seemed to unite the substance of a land-tax with the forms of a capitation.^{178a} The returns which were sent of every province or district expressed the number of tributary subjects, and the amount of the public impositions. The latter of these sums was divided by the former; and the estimate, that such a province contained so many *capita*, or heads of tribute, and that each *head* was rated at such a price, was universally received, not

Assessed in the form of a capitation.

¹⁷⁸ Godefroy (Cod. Theod. tom. v. p. 116 [l. xiv. tit. x. leg. 2]) argues with weight and learning on the subject of the capitation; but while he explains the *caput* as a share or measure of property, he too absolutely excludes the idea of a personal assessment.

^a Gibbon and most other writers have fallen into error respecting the finances of this period of the empire, by supposing that the word *capitatio* had only one signification. Savigny, however, in his masterly dissertation on the finances of the empire, has shown that *capitatio* signified both a land-tax and a poll-tax, which were the two principal taxes at this period. I. *The Land-tax.*—For the purposes of the land-tax the whole land of the empire was measured and divided into a certain number of pieces, each of which had to pay the same sum of money as a tax. Such a piece of land was called *caput*, sometimes *jugum*, whence the tax was named *capitatio* and sometimes *jugatio*. Since each *caput* was of the same value, and paid the same tax, its size must of course have varied according to the nature of the land composing it. It appears from an edict of Majorian that the assessed value of the capital of each *caput* was 1000 solidi, or 500*l.* (see note on p. 338), but whether this was its real value or not may be doubted: probably its real value was greater than its assessed value. (Nov. Majoriani in the Berlin ed. of the Jus Civ. Antejust. Nov. xcii. § 16.) The nature of the census or general register of the land of the empire is described at length by Ulpian (Dig. 50, tit. 15, l. 4). In the middle ages the registers were called *capitulastra*, because they contained lists of the *capita*. Hence the word *census*, which continues in use on the continent down to the present day. There was a periodical revision of the census, in the time of Ulpian every ten years, and at a later period every fifteen years. For each financial year, which commenced on the 1st of September, the whole amount of the land-tax was fixed, and was then divided among the *capita*. The payment had to be made in three instalments—on the 1st of January, the 1st of May, and

the 1st of September. The tribute appointed for each year was called *indictio*, a term which also came to be applied to the financial year. (See preceding note, p. 533.)

II. *The Poll-tax.*—The poll-tax was called sometimes simply *capitatio*, sometimes *humana capitatio*, *capitalis illatio*, and *capitatio plebeia*. The amount of this tax is unknown. Every person in the empire was liable to pay it, with the exception of the following classes. 1. All persons who paid the land-tax were exempt from the poll-tax. Consequently the poll-tax was a kind of supplement to the land-tax, and was intended as a direct tax upon those persons who would otherwise have escaped direct taxation, because they possessed no landed property. 2. All persons above the rank of plebeians were also exempt. The expression *plebeia capitatio* shows that it was a peculiar burthen of the plebeians; but if the latter possessed property in land, it follows from the preceding exemption that they did not pay the poll-tax as well as the land-tax. Consequently the classes from whom the poll-tax was chiefly levied were—1. The free inhabitants of towns, who possessed neither rank nor landed property. 2. The Coloni in the country. 3. The slaves. But by an edict of Diocletian, which, though repealed by Galerius, was renewed by Licinius, the *plebs urbana* and their slaves were exempt, so that the tax henceforth fell exclusively upon the Coloni and agricultural slaves. The proprietor of the land had to pay the tax for the Coloni upon his estate, from whom he recovered it. In like manner, the owners of slaves had to pay the tax upon their slaves; but as the latter had no property, the tax was in reality a tax upon the masters. Savigny, *ut supra*, vol. ii. p. 67, foll.—S.

only in the popular, but even in the legal computation. The value of a tributary head must have varied, according to many accidental, or at least fluctuating circumstances: but some knowledge has been preserved of a very curious fact, the more important since it relates to one of the richest provinces of the Roman empire, and which now flourishes as the most splendid of the European kingdoms. The rapacious ministers of Constantius had exhausted the wealth of Gaul, by exacting twenty-five pieces of gold for the annual tribute of every head. The humane policy of his successor reduced the capitation to seven pieces.¹⁷⁹ A moderate proportion between these opposite extremes of extraordinary oppression and of transient indulgence may therefore be fixed at sixteen pieces of gold, or about nine pounds sterling, the common standard, perhaps, of the impositions of Gaul.¹⁸⁰ But this calculation, or rather indeed the facts from whence it is deduced, cannot fail of suggesting two difficulties to a thinking mind, who will be at once surprised by the *equality* and by the *enormity* of the capitation. An attempt to explain them may perhaps reflect some light on the interesting subject of the finances of the declining empire.

I. It is obvious that, as long as the immutable constitution of human nature produces and maintains so unequal a division of property, the most numerous part of the community would be deprived of their subsistence by the equal assessment of a tax from which the sovereign would derive a very trifling revenue. Such, indeed, might be the theory of the Roman capitation; but, in the practice, this

¹⁷⁹ Quid profuerit (*Julianus*) anhelantibus extremâ penuriâ Gallis, hinc maxime claret, quod primitus partes eas ingressus, pro *capitibus* singulis tributî nomine vicenos quinos aureos reperit flagitari: discedens vero septenos tantum, munera universa complentes. Ammian. l. xvi. c. 5.

¹⁸⁰ In the calculation of any sum of money under Constantine and his successors, we need only refer to the excellent discourse of Mr. Greaves on the Denarius for the proof of the following principles: 1. That the ancient and modern Roman pound, containing 5256 grains of Troy weight, is about one-twelfth lighter than the English pound, which is composed of 5760 of the same grains. 2. That the pound of gold, which had once been divided into forty-eight *aurei*, was at this time coined into seventy-two smaller pieces of the same denomination. 3. That five of these *aurei* were the legal tender for a pound of silver, and that consequently the pound of gold was exchanged for fourteen pounds eight ounces of silver, according to the Roman, or about thirteen pounds according to the English weight. 4. That the English pound of silver is coined into sixty-two shillings. From these elements we may compute the Roman pound of gold, the usual method of reckoning large sums, at forty pounds sterling, and we may fix the currency of the *aureus* at somewhat more than eleven shillings.^a

^a According to Savigny's calculations, the aureus in the time of Constantine was equal to three thalers eight groschen (Saxon), that is ten shillings English. After the preceding note, it need hardly be observed that the *capita* in Gaul were not "heads of tribute," but pieces of land. Each piece of land had to pay

before Julian's administration twenty-five *aurei*, or 12*l.* 10*s.*, which he reduced to seven *aurei*, or 3*l.* 10*s.* Properly these sums should be somewhat less in English money, since the relation of silver to gold in Constantine's time was 1 to 14*g*, while the difference at present is somewhat greater. Savigny, *ut supra*, vol. ii. p. 144.—S.

unjust equality was no longer felt, as the tribute was collected on the principle of a *real*, not of a *personal* imposition. Several indigent citizens contributed to compose a single *head*, or share of taxation; while the wealthy provincial, in proportion to his fortune, alone represented several of those imaginary beings. In a poetical request, addressed to one of the last and most deserving of the Roman princes who reigned in Gaul, Sidonius Apollinaris personifies his tribute under the figure of a triple monster, the Geryon of the Grecian fables, and entreats the new Hercules that he would most graciously be pleased to save his life by cutting off three of his heads.¹⁸¹ The fortune of Sidonius far exceeded the customary wealth of a poet; but if he had pursued the allusion, he must have painted many of the Gallic nobles with the hundred heads of the deadly Hydra, spreading over the face of the country, and devouring the substance of an hundred families. II. The difficulty of allowing an annual sum of about nine pounds sterling, even for the average of the capitation of Gaul, may be rendered more evident by the comparison of the present state of the same country, as it is now governed by the absolute monarch of an industrious, wealthy, and affectionate people. The taxes of France cannot be magnified, either by fear or by flattery, beyond the annual amount of eighteen millions sterling, which ought, perhaps, to be shared among four-and-twenty millions of inhabitants.¹⁸² Seven millions of these, in the capacity of fathers, or brothers, or husbands, may discharge the obligations of the remaining multitude of women and children; yet the equal proportion of each tributary subject will scarcely rise above fifty shillings of our money, instead of a proportion almost four times as considerable, which was regularly imposed on

¹⁸¹ Geryones nos esse puta, monstrumque tributum,
Hic capitu ut vivam, tu mihi tolle triu.

Sidon. Apollinar. Carm. xiii. [v. 19.]

The reputation of Father Sirmond led me to expect more satisfaction than I have found in his note (p. 144) on this remarkable passage. The words, *suo vel suorum nomine*, betray the perplexity of the commentator.

¹⁸² This assertion, however formidable it may seem, is founded on the original registers of births, deaths, and marriages, collected by public authority, and now deposited in the *Contrôle Général* at Paris. The annual average of births throughout the whole kingdom, taken in five years (from 1770 to 1774, both inclusive), is 479,649 boys and 449,269 girls, in all 928,918 children. The province of French Hainault alone furnishes 9906 births; and we are assured, by an actual enumeration of the people, annually repeated from the year 1773 to the year 1776, that, upon an average, Hainault contains 257,097 inhabitants. By the rules of fair analogy, we might infer that the ordinary proportion of annual births to the whole people is about 1 to 26; and that the kingdom of France contains 24,151,868 persons of both sexes and of every age. If we content ourselves with the more moderate proportion of 1 to 25, the whole population will amount to 23,222,950. From the diligent researches of the French government (which are not unworthy of our own imitation) we may hope to obtain a still greater degree of certainty on this important subject.^a

^a In 1851 the total population of France was 35,781,628.—S.

their Gallic ancestors. The reason of this difference may be found, not so much in the relative scarcity or plenty of gold and silver, as in the different state of society in ancient Gaul and in modern France. In a country where personal freedom is the privilege of every subject, the whole mass of taxes, whether they are levied on property or on consumption, may be fairly divided among the whole body of the nation. But the far greater part of the lands of ancient Gaul, as well as of the other provinces of the Roman world, were cultivated by slaves, or by peasants, whose dependent condition was a less rigid servitude.¹⁸³ In such a state the poor were maintained at the expense of the masters who enjoyed the fruits of their labour; and as the rolls of tribute were filled only with the names of those citizens who possessed the means of an honourable, or at least of a decent subsistence, the comparative smallness of their numbers explains and justifies the high rate of their capitation. The truth of this assertion may be illustrated by the following example:—The *Ædui*, one of the most powerful and civilized tribes or *cities* of Gaul, occupied an extent of territory which now contains above five hundred thousand inhabitants, in the two ecclesiastical dioceses of Autun and Nevers;¹⁸⁴ and with the probable accession of those of Châlons and Maçon,¹⁸⁵ the population would amount to eight hundred thousand souls. In the time of Constantine the territory of the *Ædui* afforded no more than twenty-five thousand *heads* of capitation, of whom seven thousand were discharged by that prince from the intolerable weight of tribute.¹⁸⁶ A just analogy would seem to countenance the opinion of an ingenious historian,¹⁸⁷ that the free and tributary citizens did not surpass the

¹⁸³ Cod. Theod. l. v. tit. ix. x. xi. Cod. Justinian. l. xi. tit. lxiii. *Coloni appellanti qui conditionem debent genituli solo, propter agriculturam sub dominio possessorum.* Augustin. de Civitate Dei, l. x. c. i.

¹⁸⁴ The ancient jurisdiction of (*Augustodunum*) Autun in Burgundy, the capital of the *Ædui*, comprehended the adjacent territory of (*Noviodunum*) Nevers. See d'Anville, Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule, p. 491. The two dioceses of Autun and Nevers are now composed, the former of 610, and the latter of 160 parishes. The registers of births, taken during eleven years, in 476 parishes of the same province of Burgundy, and multiplied by the moderate proportion of 25 (see Messance, Recherches sur la Population, p. 142), may authorise us to assign an average number of 656 persons for each parish, which, being again multiplied by the 770 parishes of the dioceses of Nevers and Autun, will produce the sum of 505,120 persons for the extent of country which was once possessed by the *Ædui*.

¹⁸⁵ We might derive an additional supply of 301,750 inhabitants from the dioceses of Châlons (*Cabillonum*) and of Maçon (*Matisco*); since they contain, the one 200, and the other 260 parishes. This accession of territory might be justified by very specious reasons. 1. Châlons and Maçon were undoubtedly within the original jurisdiction of the *Ædui*. (See d'Anville, Notice, p. 187, 443.) 2. In the *Notitia* of Gaul they are enumerated not as *Civitates*, but merely as *Castra*. 3. They do not appear to have been episcopal seats before the fifth and sixth centuries. Yet there is a passage in Eumenius (*Panegy. Vet. viii. [vii.] 7*) which very forcibly deters me from extending the territory of the *Ædui*, in the reign of Constantine, along the beautiful banks of the navigable Saône.

¹⁸⁶ Eumenius in *Panegy. Vet. viii. [vii.] 11*.

¹⁸⁷ L'Abbé du Bos, *Hist. Critique de la M. F. tom. i. p. 121*.

number of half a million; and if, in the ordinary administration of government, their annual payments may be computed at about four millions and a half of our money, it would appear that, although the share of each individual was four times as considerable, a fourth part only of the modern taxes of France was levied on the Imperial province of Gaul. The exactions of Constantius may be calculated at seven millions sterling, which were reduced to two millions by the humanity or the wisdom of Julian.^a

But this tax or capitation on the proprietors of land would have suffered a rich and numerous class of free citizens to escape. With the view of sharing that species of wealth which is derived from art or labour, and which exists in money or in merchandise, the emperors imposed a distinct and personal tribute

Capitation
on trade and
industry.

^a The preceding account of the taxation of Gaul needs correction in several points. The words of Eumenius, to which Gibbon refers in note 186, are,—"Septem millia capitum remisisti, quintam amplius partem nostrorum censuum . . . Remissione ista septem millium capitum, viginti quinque millibus dedisti vires, dedisti opem, dedisti salutem," &c. The word capita in this passage means pieces of land; and Gibbon supposes that there were 25,000 capita in the land of the *Ædui*, of which 7000 were exempted by Constantine from taxation, thus reducing the number to 18,000. This interpretation has been adopted by all subsequent writers down to Savigny, who, however, has shown that there were originally 32,000 capita, which were reduced to 25,000 by Constantine. The words "quintam amplius partem" would be inadmissible if Gibbon's interpretation were correct, since 7000 is even more than the fourth part of 25,000.

Adopting Gibbon's statistics, that the population of France in his time was, in round numbers, 24,000,000 (note 182), and that the ancient district of the *Ædui* contained, in round numbers, half a million of inhabitants (note 184), it follows that this district was about a forty-eighth part of the territory of modern France. Consequently, as Constantine fixed 25,000 capita as the right proportion for the land of the *Ædui*, there were 1,200,000 capita in all France. This is very different from the calculation of Gibbon, who makes the capita only 500,000; but this erroneous calculation arises from two causes: 1. He makes the capita of the *Ædui* 18,000, instead of 25,000. 2. He supposes the territory of the *Ædui* to have contained in his time 800,000 inhabitants, a thirtieth part of the population of France ($18,000 \times 30 = 540,000$),

although he has himself considered this number as less probable than 500,000. (See notes 184, 185.)

Since each *caput* paid before Julian's administration 12*l.* 10*s.*, and under his administration 3*l.* 10*s.* (see note, p. 338), and supposing there were 1,200,000 capita in France, it follows that the taxation of the whole country amounted, according to the higher assessment, to 15,000,000*l.*; according to the lower, to 4,200,000*l.* This calculation, however, is founded on the supposition that the reduction by Constantine of the capita of the *Ædui* to 25,000 only placed the *Ædui* on a level with their neighbours; but if this reduction was an act of favour, or rested on special circumstances, as Eumenius intimates, the capita of France would have to be calculated according to the 32,000 capita of the *Ædui*, and would in that case amount to 1,536,000. Hence the higher taxation would be 19,200,000*l.*; the lower, 5,376,000*l.*

In France, in the year 1818, the land-tax proper (contribution foncière en principal) amounted to 172,703,000 francs, or very nearly seven millions sterling, being more than the smaller amount above mentioned, but considerably less than the larger. Gibbon calculates that the capita yielded four millions and a half sterling; and since the revenue of France was in his time 18 millions, he concludes that "a fourth part only of the modern taxes of France was levied on the province of Imperial Gaul;" but in this calculation he makes the great error of comparing the whole taxes of modern France with a single tax in the Roman empire, since he omits not only the poll-tax, which he did not recognise, but also all indirect taxes. See Savigny, *ut supra*.

—S.

on the trading part of their subjects.¹⁸⁸ Some exemptions, very strictly confined both in time and place, were allowed to the proprietors who disposed of the produce of their own estates. Some indulgence was granted to the profession of the liberal arts; but every other branch of commercial industry was affected by the severity of the law. The honourable merchant of Alexandria, who imported the gems and spices of India for the use of the western world; the usurer, who derived from the interest of money a silent and ignominious profit; the ingenious manufacturer, the diligent mechanic, and even the most obscure retailer of a sequestered village, were obliged to admit the officers of the revenue into the partnership of their gain; and the sovereign of the Roman empire, who tolerated the profession, consented to share the infamous salary of public prostitutes.^a As this general tax upon industry was collected every fourth year, it was styled the *Lustral Contribution*: and the historian Zosimus¹⁸⁹ laments that the approach of the fatal period was announced by the tears and terrors of the citizens, who were often compelled by the impending scourge to embrace the most abhorred and unnatural methods of procuring the sum at which their poverty had been assessed. The testimony of Zosimus cannot indeed be justified from the charge of passion and prejudice; but, from the nature of this tribute, it seems reasonable to conclude that it was arbitrary in the distribution, and extremely rigorous in the mode of collecting. The secret wealth of commerce, and the precarious profits of art or labour, are susceptible only of a discretionary valuation, which is seldom disadvantageous to the interest of the treasury; and as the person of the trader supplies the want of a visible and permanent security, the payment of the imposition, which, in the case of a land-tax, may be obtained by the seizure of property, can rarely be extorted by any other means than those of corporal punishments. The cruel treatment of the insolvent debtors of the state is attested, and was perhaps mitigated, by a very humane edict of Constantine, who, disclaiming the use of racks and of scourges, allots a spacious and airy prison for the place of their confinement.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ See Cod. Theod. l. xiii. tit. i. and iv.

¹⁸⁹ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 38] p. 115. There is probably as much passion and prejudice in the attack of Zosimus as in the elaborate defence of the memory of Constantine by the zealous Dr. Howell. Hist. of the World, vol. ii. p. 20.

¹⁹⁰ Cod. Theod. l. xi. tit. vii. leg. 3.

^a The emperor Theodosius put an end, by a law, to this disgraceful source of revenue. (Godefroy ad Cod. Theod. xiii. tit. i. c. 1.) But before he deprived himself of it, he made sure of some way of replacing this deficit. A rich patrician, Florentius, indignant at this legalised li-

centiousness, had made representations on the subject to the emperor. To induce him to tolerate it no longer, he offered his own property, to supply the diminution of the revenue. The emperor had the baseness to accept his offer.—G.

These general taxes were imposed and levied by the absolute authority of the monarch; but the occasional offerings of the *coronary gold* still retained the name and semblance of ^{Free gifts.} popular consent. It was an ancient custom that the allies of the republic, who ascribed their safety or deliverance to the success of the Roman arms, and even the cities of Italy, who admired the virtues of their victorious general, adorned the pomp of his triumph by their voluntary gifts of crowns of gold, which, after the ceremony, were consecrated in the temple of Jupiter, to remain a lasting monument of his glory to future ages. The progress of zeal and flattery soon multiplied the number, and increased the size, of these popular donations; and the triumph of Cæsar was enriched with two thousand eight hundred and twenty-two massy crowns, whose weight amounted to twenty thousand four hundred and fourteen pounds of gold. This treasure was immediately melted down by the prudent dictator, who was satisfied that it would be more serviceable to his soldiers than to the gods: his example was imitated by his successors; and the custom was introduced of exchanging these splendid ornaments for the more acceptable present of the current gold coin of the empire.¹⁹¹ The spontaneous offering was at length exacted as the debt of duty; and, instead of being confined to the occasion of a triumph, it was supposed to be granted by the several cities and provinces of the monarchy as often as the emperor condescended to announce his accession, his consulship, the birth of a son, the creation of a Cæsar, a victory over the barbarians, or any other real or imaginary event which graced the annals of his reign. The peculiar free gift of the senate of Rome was fixed by custom at sixteen hundred pounds of gold, or about sixty-four thousand pounds sterling. The oppressed subjects celebrated their own felicity that their sovereign should graciously consent to accept this feeble but voluntary testimony of their loyalty and gratitude.¹⁹²

A people elated by pride, or soured by discontent, is seldom qualified to form a just estimate of their actual situation. The subjects of Constantine were incapable of discerning the decline of genius and manly virtue, which so far degraded them below the dignity of their ancestors; but they could feel and lament the rage of tyranny, the relaxation of discipline, and the increase of taxes. The impartial historian, who acknowledges the justice of their

Conclusion.

¹⁹¹ See Lipsius de Magnitud. Romanâ, l. ii. c. 9. The Tarragonese Spain presented the emperor Claudius with a crown of gold of seven, and Gaul with another of nine, hundred pounds weight. I have followed the rational emendation of Lipsius.

¹⁹² Cod. Theod. l. xii. tit. xiii. The senators were supposed to be exempt from the *Auran Coronarium*; but the *Auri Oblatio*, which was required at their hands, was precisely of the same nature.

complaints, will observe some favourable circumstances which tended to alleviate the misery of their condition. The threatening tempest of barbarians, which so soon subverted the foundations of Roman greatness, was still repelled, or suspended, on the frontiers. The arts of luxury and literature were cultivated, and the elegant pleasures of society were enjoyed, by the inhabitants of a considerable portion of the globe. The forms, the pomp, and the expense of the civil administration contributed to restrain the irregular licence of the soldiers, and although the laws were violated by power, or perverted by subtlety, the sage principles of the Roman jurisprudence preserved a sense of order and equity unknown to the despotic governments of the East. The rights of mankind might derive some protection from religion and philosophy; and the name of freedom, which could no longer alarm, might sometimes admonish, the successors of Augustus, that they did not reign over a nation of Slaves or Barbarians.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ The great Theodosius, in his judicious advice to his son (Claudian. in iv. Consul. Honorii, 214, &c.), distinguishes the station of a Roman prince from that of a Parthian monarch. Virtue was necessary for the one; birth might suffice for the other.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHARACTER OF CONSTANTINE.—GOTHIC WAR.—DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.—
DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE AMONG HIS THREE SONS.—PERSIAN WAR.—TRAGIC
DEATHS OF CONSTANTINE THE YOUNGER AND CONSTANS.—USURPATION OF
MAGNENTIUS.—CIVIL WAR.—VICTORY OF CONSTANTIUS.

THE character of the prince who removed the seat of empire, and introduced such important changes into the civil and religious constitution of his country, has fixed the attention, and divided the opinions, of mankind. By the grateful zeal of the Christians the deliverer of the church has been decorated with every attribute of a hero, and even of a saint; while the discontent of the vanquished party has compared Constantine to the most abhorred of those tyrants who, by their vice and weakness, dishonoured the Imperial purple. The same passions have, in some degree, been perpetuated to succeeding generations, and the character of Constantine is considered, even in the present age, as an object either of satire or of panegyric. By the impartial union of those defects which are confessed by his warmest admirers, and of those virtues which are acknowledged by his most implacable enemies, we might hope to delineate a just portrait of that extraordinary man, which the truth and candour of history should adopt without a blush.¹ But it would soon appear that the vain attempt to blend such discordant colours, and to reconcile such inconsistent qualities, must produce a figure monstrous rather than human, unless it is viewed in its proper and distinct lights by a careful separation of the different periods of the reign of Constantine.

The person, as well as the mind, of Constantine had been enriched by nature with her choicest endowments. His stature was lofty, his countenance majestic, his deportment graceful; his strength and activity were displayed in every manly exercise, and, from his earliest youth to a very advanced season of life, he preserved the vigour of his constitution by a strict adherence to the domestic virtues of chastity and temperance. He delighted in the social intercourse of familiar conversation; and though he might

¹ On ne se trompera point sur Constantin en croyant tout le mal qu'en dit Eusèbe, et tout le bien qu'en dit Zosime. Fleury, Hist. Ecclésiastique, tom. iii. p. 233. Eusebius and Zosimus form indeed the two extremes of flattery and invective. The intermediate shades are expressed by those writers whose character or situation variously tempered the influence of their religious zeal.

sometimes indulge his disposition to raillery with less reserve than was required by the severe dignity of his station, the courtesy and liberality of his manners gained the hearts of all who approached him. The sincerity of his friendship has been suspected; yet he showed, on some occasions, that he was not incapable of a warm and lasting attachment. The disadvantage of an illiterate education had not prevented him from forming a just estimate of the value of learning; and the arts and sciences derived some encouragement from the munificent protection of Constantine. In the despatch of business his diligence was indefatigable; and the active powers of his mind were almost continually exercised in reading, writing, or meditating, in giving audience to ambassadors, and in examining the complaints of his subjects. Even those who censured the propriety of his measures were compelled to acknowledge that he possessed magnanimity to conceive, and patience to execute, the most arduous designs, without being checked either by the prejudices of education or by the clamours of the multitude. In the field he infused his own intrepid spirit into the troops, whom he conducted with the talents of a consummate general; and to his abilities, rather than to his fortune, we may ascribe the signal victories which he obtained over the foreign and domestic foes of the republic. He loved glory as the reward, perhaps as the motive, of his labours. The boundless ambition which, from the moment of his accepting the purple at York, appears as the ruling passion of his soul, may be justified by the dangers of his own situation, by the character of his rivals, by the consciousness of superior merit, and by the prospect that his success would enable him to restore peace and order to the distracted empire. In his civil wars against Maxentius and Licinius he had engaged on his side the inclinations of the people, who compared the undissembled vices of those tyrants with the spirit of wisdom and justice which seemed to direct the general tenor of the administration of Constantine.²

Had Constantine fallen on the banks of the Tiber, or even in the plains of Hadrianople, such is the character which, with a few exceptions, he might have transmitted to posterity. But the conclusion of his reign (according to the moderate and indeed tender sentence of a writer of the same age) degraded him from the rank which he had acquired among the most deserving of the Roman princes.³ In the life of Augustus we behold the tyrant

² The virtues of Constantine are collected for the most part from Eutropius and the younger Victor, two sincere pagans, who wrote after the extinction of his family. Even Zosimus and the *Emperor* Julian acknowledge his personal courage and military achievements.

³ See Eutropius, x. 6 [4]. In primo Imperii tempore optimis principibus, ultimo

of the republic converted almost by imperceptible degrees into the father of his country and of human kind. In that of Constantine we may contemplate a hero, who had so long inspired his subjects with love and his enemies with terror, degenerating into a cruel and dissolute monarch, corrupted by his fortune, or raised by conquest above the necessity of dissimulation. The general peace which he maintained during the last fourteen years of his reign was a period of apparent splendour rather than of real prosperity; and the old age of Constantine was disgraced by the opposite yet reconcilable vices of rapaciousness and prodigality. The accumulated treasures found in the palaces of Maxentius and Licinius were lavishly consumed; the various innovations introduced by the conqueror were attended with an increasing expense; the cost of his buildings, his court, and his festivals required an immediate and plentiful supply; and the oppression of the people was the only fund which could support the magnificence of the sovereign.⁴ His unworthy favourites, enriched by the boundless liberality of their master, usurped with impunity the privilege of rapine and corruption.⁵ A secret but universal decay was felt in every part of the public administration, and the emperor himself, though he still retained the obedience, gradually lost the esteem, of his subjects. The dress and manners which, towards the decline of life, he chose to affect, served only to degrade him in the eyes of mankind. The Asiatic pomp which had been adopted by the pride of Diocletian assumed an air of softness and effeminacy in the person of Constantine. He is represented with false hair of various colours, laboriously arranged by the skilful artists of the times; a diadem of a new and more expensive fashion; a profusion of gems and pearls, of collars and bracelets; and a variegated flowing robe of silk, most curiously embroidered with flowers of gold. In such apparel, scarcely to be excused by the youth and folly of Elagabalus, we are at a loss to discover the wisdom of an aged monarch and the simplicity of a Roman veteran.⁶ A mind thus

mediis comparandus. From the ancient Greek version of Pœanius (edit. Havercamp. p. 697), I am inclined to suspect that Eutropius had originally written *vis mediis*; and that the offensive monosyllable was dropped by the wilful inadvertency of transcribers. Aurelius Victor expresses the general opinion by a vulgar and indeed obscure proverb. *Trachala decem annis præstantissimus; duodecim sequentibus latro; decem novissimis pupillus ob immodicas profusiones.* [Epit. c. 41.]

⁴ Julian, Orat. i. p. 8, in a flattering discourse pronounced before the son of Constantine; and Cæsares, p. 335. Zosimus, [l. ii. c. 38] p. 114, 115. The stately buildings of Constantinople, &c., may be quoted as a lasting and unexceptionable proof of the profuseness of their founder.

⁵ The impartial Ammianus deserves all our confidence. *Proximorum fauces aperuit primus omnium Constantinus.* l. xvi. c. 8. Eusebius himself confesses the abuse (Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 29, 54); and some of the Imperial laws feebly point out the remedy. See above, pp. 316, 317 of this volume.

⁶ Julian, in the Cæsars, attempts to ridicule his uncle. His suspicious testimony is confirmed however by the learned Spanheim, with the authority of medals (see

relaxed by prosperity and indulgence was incapable of rising to that magnanimity which disdains suspicion and dares to forgive. The deaths of Maximian and Licinius may perhaps be justified by the maxims of policy as they are taught in the schools of tyrants; but an impartial narrative of the executions, or rather murders, which sullied the declining age of Constantine, will suggest to our most candid thoughts the idea of a prince who could sacrifice, without reluctance, the laws of justice and the feelings of nature to the dictates either of his passions or of his interest.

The same fortune which so invariably followed the standard of His family. Constantine seemed to secure the hopes and comforts of his domestic life. Those among his predecessors who had enjoyed the longest and most prosperous reigns, Augustus, Trajan, and Diocletian, had been disappointed of posterity; and the frequent revolutions had never allowed sufficient time for any Imperial family to grow up and multiply under the shade of the purple. But the royalty of the Flavian line, which had been first ennobled by the Gothic Claudius, descended through several generations; and Constantine himself derived from his royal father the hereditary honours which he transmitted to his children. The emperor had been twice married. Minervina, the obscure but lawful object of his youthful attachment,⁷ had left him only one son, who was called Crispus. By Fausta, the daughter of Maximian, he had three daughters, and three sons known by the kindred names of Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. The unambitious brothers of the great Constantine, Julius Constantius, Dalmatius, and Hannibalianus,⁸ were permitted to enjoy the most honourable rank and the most affluent fortune that could be consistent with a private station. The youngest of the three lived without a name and died without posterity. His two elder brothers obtained in marriage the daughters of wealthy senators, and propagated new branches of the Imperial race. Gallus and Julian afterwards became the most illustrious of the children of Julius Constantius, the *Patrician*. The two sons of Dalmatius, who had been decorated with the vain title of *Censor*, were named Dalmatius and Hannibalianus. The two sisters of the great Constantine, Anastasia

Commentaire, p. 156, 299, 397, 459). Eusebius (Orat. c. 5) alleges that Constantine dressed for the public, not for himself. Were this admitted, the vainest coxcomb could never want an excuse.

⁷ Zosimus [l. ii. c. 20] and Zonaras agree in representing Minervina as the concubine of Constantine; but Ducange has very gallantly rescued her character, by producing a decisive passage from one of the panegyrics: "Ab ipso fine pueritiæ te matrimonii legibus dedisti."

⁸ Ducange (Familia Byzantinæ, p. 44) bestows on him, after Zonaras, the name of Constantine; a name somewhat unlikely, as it was already occupied by the elder brother. That of Hannibalianus is mentioned in the Paschal Chronicle, and is approved by Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 527.

The following is the genealogical table of the family of Constantine :—

Crispus, brother of the emperor Claudius Gothicus.

Claudia = Eutropius.

Helena = CONSTANTIUS I., CHLORUS = Theodora,
daughter of Maximianus, Imp. ob. 306.
Theodora, see below.

For issue of Constantius Chlorus by

Minervina = CONSTANTINUS I. = Fausta,
daughter of Maximianus.
Imp. ob. 337.

Crispus,
ob. 326.

CONSTANTINUS II.
Imp. ob. 340.

CONSTANTIUS II.
Imp. ob. 361.

CONSTANS,
Imp. ob. 350.

Constantina,
ob. 354.
m. 1. Hannibalianus.
2. Gallus Cæsar.

Helena,
ob. 360.
m. Julianus,
aft. Imp.

Constantia Postuma = Gratianus,
Imp. ob. 383.

Issue of CONSTANTIUS I. (CHLORUS) by Theodora.

Galla = Constantius = Basilina.

Gallus Cæsar,
ob. 354,
m. Constantina.
See above.

JULIANUS,
Imp.
ob. 363.
m. Helena.
See above.

Dalmatius.

Dalmatius.

Hannibalianus,
m. Constantina.
See above.

Hannibalianus, or
Constantinus.

Constantia,
m. Licinius,
Imp.

Licinius.

Anastasia,
m. Bassianus Cæsar.

Eutropia.
m. Nepotianus.

Nepotianus,
ob. 350.

—S.

and Eutropia, were bestowed on Optatus and Nepotianus, two senators of noble birth and of consular dignity. His third sister, Constantia, was distinguished by her pre-eminence of greatness and of misery. She remained the widow of the vanquished Licinius; and it was by her entreaties that an innocent boy, the offspring of their marriage, preserved, for some time, his life, the title of Cæsar, and a precarious hope of the succession. Besides the females and the allies of the Flavian house, ten or twelve males, to whom the language of modern courts would apply the title of princes of the blood, seemed, according to the order of their birth, to be destined either to inherit or to support the throne of Constantine. But in less than thirty years this numerous and increasing family was reduced to the persons of Constantius and Julian, who alone had survived a series of crimes and calamities such as the tragic poets have deplored in the devoted lines of Pelops and of Cadmus.

Crispus, the eldest son of Constantine, and the presumptive heir of the empire, is represented by impartial historians as an amiable and accomplished youth. The care of his education, or at least of his studies, was intrusted to Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Christians; a preceptor admirably qualified to form the taste and to excite the virtues of his illustrious disciple.⁹ At the age of seventeen Crispus was invested with the title of Cæsar, and the administration of the Gallic provinces, where the inroads of the Germans gave him an early occasion of signalling his military prowess. In the civil war which broke out soon afterwards, the father and son divided their powers; and this history has already celebrated the valour as well as conduct displayed by the latter in forcing the straits of the Hellespont, so obstinately defended by the superior fleet of Licinius. This naval victory contributed to determine the event of the war, and the names of Constantine and of Crispus were united in the joyful acclamations of their eastern subjects, who loudly proclaimed that the world had been subdued, and was now governed, by an emperor endowed with every virtue, and by his illustrious son, a prince beloved of Heaven, and the lively image of his father's perfections. The public favour, which seldom accompanies old age, diffused its lustre over the youth of Crispus. He deserved the esteem and he engaged the affections of the court, the army, and the people. The experienced merit of a reigning monarch is acknowledged by his subjects with reluctance, and frequently denied with partial and discontented murmurs; while, from

⁹ Jerom. in Chron. The poverty of Lactantius may be applied either to the praise of the disinterested philosopher, or to the shame of the unfeeling patron. See Tillomont, *Mém. Ecclésiast.* tom. vi. part i. p. 345. Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclésiast.* tom. i. p. 205. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*, part ii. vol. vii. p. 63.

the opening virtues of his successor, they fondly conceive the most unbounded hopes of private as well as public felicity.¹⁰

This dangerous popularity soon excited the attention of Constantine, who, both as a father and as a king, was impatient of an equal. Instead of attempting to secure the allegiance of his son by the generous ties of confidence and gratitude, he resolved to prevent the mischiefs which might be apprehended from dissatisfied ambition. Crispus soon had reason to complain that, while his infant brother Constantius was sent with the title of Cæsar to reign over his peculiar department of the Gallic provinces,¹¹ *he*, a prince of mature years, who had performed such recent and signal services, instead of being raised to the superior rank of Augustus, was confined almost a prisoner to his father's court, and exposed, without power or defence, to every calumny which the malice of his enemies could suggest. Under such painful circumstances the royal youth might not always be able to compose his behaviour or suppress his discontent; and we may be assured that he was encompassed by a train of indiscreet or perfidious followers, who assiduously studied to inflame, and who were perhaps instructed to betray, the unguarded warmth of his resentment. An edict of Constantine, published about this time, manifestly indicates his real or affected suspicions that a secret conspiracy had been formed against his person and government. By all the allurements of honours and rewards he invites informers of every degree to accuse, without exception, his magistrates or ministers, his friends or his most intimate favourites, protesting, with a solemn asseveration, that he himself will listen to the charge, that he himself will revenge his injuries; and concluding with a prayer, which discovers some apprehension of danger, that the providence of the Supreme Being may still continue to protect the safety of the emperor and of the empire.¹²

Jealousy of
Constantine,
A.D. 324.
October 10.

A.D. 325.
October 1.

The informers who complied with so liberal an invitation were sufficiently versed in the arts of courts to select the friends and adherents of Crispus as the guilty persons; nor is there any reason to distrust the veracity of the emperor, who had

Disgrace and
death of
Crispus,
A.D. 326.
July.

¹⁰ Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. x. c. 9. Eutropius (x. 4) styles him "egregium virum;" and Julian (Orat. i.) very plainly alludes to the exploits of Crispus in the civil war. See Spanheim, Comment. p. 92.

¹¹ Compare Idatius and the Paschal Chronicle with Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 5). The year in which Constantius was created Cæsar seems to be more accurately fixed by the two chronologists; but the historian who lived in his court could not be ignorant of the day of the anniversary. For the appointment of the new Cæsar to the provinces of Gaul, see Julian, Orat. i. p. 12; Godefroy, Chronol. Legum, p. 26; and Blondel, de la Primauté de l'Eglise, p. 1183.

¹² Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. iv. [tit. 1, leg. 4.] Godefroy suspected the secret motives of this law. Comment. tom. iii. p. 9.

promised an ample measure of revenge and punishment. The policy of Constantine maintained, however, the same appearances of regard and confidence towards a son whom he began to consider as his most irreconcilable enemy. Medals were struck with the customary vows for the long and auspicious reign of the young Cæsar;¹³ and as the people, who was not admitted into the secrets of the palace, still loved his virtues and respected his dignity, a poet, who solicits his recall from exile, adores with equal devotion the majesty of the father and that of the son.¹⁴ The time was now arrived for celebrating the august ceremony of the twentieth year of the reign of Constantine, and the emperor, for that purpose, removed his court from Nicomedia to Rome, where the most splendid preparations had been made for his reception. Every eye and every tongue affected to express their sense of the general happiness, and the veil of ceremony and dissimulation was drawn for a while over the darkest designs of revenge and murder.¹⁵ In the midst of the festival the unfortunate Crispus was apprehended by order of the emperor, who laid aside the tenderness of a father without assuming the equity of a judge. The examination was short and private;¹⁶ and as it was thought decent to conceal the fate of the young prince from the eyes of the Roman people, he was sent under a strong guard to Pola, in Istria, where, soon afterwards, he was put to death, either by the hand of the executioner or by the more gentle operation of poison.¹⁷ The Cæsar Licinius, a youth of amiable manners, was involved in the ruin of Crispus,¹⁸ and the stern jealousy of Constantine was unmoved by the

¹³ Ducange, *Fam. Byzant.* p. 28. Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 610.

¹⁴ His name was Porphyrius Optatianus. The date of his panegyric, written according to the taste of the age in vile acrostics, is settled by Scaliger ad Euseb. p. 250; Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 607; and Fabricius, *Biblioth. Latin.* l. iv. c. 1.

¹⁵ Zosim. l. ii. [c. 29] p. 103. Godefroy, *Chronol. Legum*, p. 28.

¹⁶ *Ἀνεπίτῳ*, without a trial, is the strong and most probably the just expression of Suidas. The elder Victor, who wrote under the next reign, speaks with becoming caution. "Nātū grandior, incertum quā causā, patris judicio occidisset." [De Cæsar. c. 41.] If we consult the succeeding writers, Eutropius, the younger Victor, Orosius, Jerom, Zosimus, Philostorgius, and Gregory of Tours, their knowledge will appear gradually to increase as their means of information must have diminished, a circumstance which frequently occurs in historical disquisition.

¹⁷ Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 11) uses the general expression of *parenptium*. Codinus (p. 34) [p. 63, ed. Bonn] beheads the young prince; but Sidonius Apollinaris (Epistol. v. 8), for the sake perhaps of an antithesis to Fausta's warm bath, chooses to administer a draught of cold poison.

¹⁸ *Sororis filium, commode indolis juvenem*. Eutropius, x. 6 [4]. May I not be permitted to conjecture that Crispus had married Helena, the daughter of the emperor Licinius, and that on the happy delivery of the princess, in the year 322, a general pardon was granted by Constantine? See Ducange, *Fam. Byzant.* p. 47, and the law (l. ix. tit. xxxvii.) of the Theodosian code, which has so much embarrassed the interpreters. Godefroy, tom. iii. p. 267.^a

^a This conjecture is very doubtful: the obscurity of the law quoted from the Theodosian code scarcely allows any inference, and there is extant but one medal which

can be attributed to a Helena, wife of Crispus. See Eckhel, *Doct. Num. Vet.* tom. viii. p. 102 and 145. --G.

prayers and tears of his favourite sister, pleading for the life of a son whose rank was his only crime, and whose loss she did not long survive. The story of these unhappy princes, the nature and evidence of their guilt, the forms of their trial, and the circumstances of their death, were buried in mysterious obscurity, and the courtly bishop, who has celebrated in an elaborate work the virtues and piety of his hero, observes a prudent silence on the subject of these tragic events.¹⁹ Such haughty contempt for the opinion of mankind, whilst it imprints an indelible stain on the memory of Constantine, must remind us of the very different behaviour of one of the greatest monarchs of the present age. The Czar Peter, in the full possession of despotic power, submitted to the judgment of Russia, of Europe, and of posterity, the reasons which had compelled him to subscribe the condemnation of a criminal, or at least of a degenerate, son.²⁰

The innocence of Crispus was so universally acknowledged that the modern Greeks, who adore the memory of their founder, are reduced to palliate the guilt of a parricide which the common feelings of human nature forbade them to justify. They pretend that, as soon as the afflicted father discovered the falsehood of the accusation by which his credulity had been so fatally misled, he published to the world his repentance and remorse; that he mourned forty days, during which he abstained from the use of the bath and all the ordinary comforts of life; and that, for the lasting instruction of posterity, he erected a golden statue of Crispus, with this memorable inscription,—TO MY SON, WHOM I UNJUSTLY CONDEMNED.²¹ A tale so moral and so interesting would deserve to be supported by less exceptionable authority; but if we consult the more ancient and authentic writers, they will inform us that the repentance of Constantine was manifested only in acts of blood and revenge, and that he atoned for the murder of an innocent son by the execution, perhaps, of a guilty wife. They ascribe the misfortunes of Crispus to the arts of his stepmother Fausta, whose implacable hatred or whose disappointed love renewed in the palace of Constantine the ancient tragedy of Hippolytus and of Phædra.²² Like the daughter of Minos, the daughter of Maximian accused her

The empress
Fausta.

¹⁹ See the Life of Constantine, particularly [Euseb.] l. ii. c. 19, 20. Two hundred and fifty years afterwards Evagrius (l. iii. c. 41) deduced from the silence of Eusebius a vain argument against the reality of the fact.

²⁰ Histoire de Pierre le Grand, par Voltaire, part ii. c. 10.

²¹ In order to prove that the statue was erected by Constantine, and afterwards concealed by the malice of the Arians, Codinus very readily creates (p. 34 [p. 63, ed. Bonn]) two witnesses, Hippolytus and the younger Herodotus, to whose imaginary histories he appeals with unblushing confidence.

²² Zosimus (l. ii. [c. 29] p. 103) may be considered as our original. The ingenuity of the moderns, assisted by a few hints from the ancients, has illustrated and improved his obscure and imperfect narrative.

son-in-law of an incestuous attempt on the chastity of his father's wife, and easily obtained, from the jealousy of the emperor, a sentence of death against a young prince whom she considered with reason as the most formidable rival of her own children. But Helena, the aged mother of Constantine, lamented and revenged the untimely fate of her grandson Crispus; nor was it long before a real or pretended discovery was made that Fausta herself entertained a criminal connection with a slave belonging to the Imperial stables.²³ Her condemnation and punishment were the instant consequences of the charge, and the adulteress was suffocated by the steam of a bath, which, for that purpose, had been heated to an extraordinary degree.²⁴ By some it will perhaps be thought that the remembrance of a conjugal union of twenty years, and the honour of their common offspring, the destined heirs of the throne, might have softened the obdurate heart of Constantine, and persuaded him to suffer his wife, however guilty she might appear, to expiate her offences in a solitary prison. But it seems a superfluous labour to weigh the propriety, unless we could ascertain the truth, of this singular event, which is attended with some circumstances of doubt and perplexity. Those who have attacked, and those who have defended, the character of Constantine, have alike disregarded two very remarkable passages of two orations pronounced under the succeeding reign. The former celebrates the virtues, the beauty, and the fortune of the empress Fausta, the daughter, wife, sister, and mother of so many princes.²⁵ The latter asserts, in explicit terms, that the mother of the younger Constantine, who was slain three years after his father's death, survived to weep over the fate of her son.²⁶ Notwithstanding the positive testimony of several writers of the Pagan as well as of the Christian religion, there may still remain some reason to believe, or at least to suspect, that Fausta escaped the

²³ Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 4. Zosimus (l. ii. p. 104 [c. 29], 116 [c. 39]) imputes to Constantine the death of two wives, of the innocent Fausta, and of an adulteress who was the mother of his three successors. According to Jerom, three or four years elapsed between the death of Crispus and that of Fausta. The elder Victor is prudently silent.

²⁴ If Fausta was put to death, it is reasonable to believe that the private apartments of the palace were the scene of her execution. The orator Chrysostom indulges his fancy by exposing the naked empress on a desert mountain to be devoured by wild beasts.

²⁵ Julian. Orat. i. [p. 9]. He seems to call her the mother of Crispus. She might assume that title by adoption. At least, she was not considered as his mortal enemy. Julian compares the fortune of Fausta with that of Parysatis, the Persian queen. A Roman would have more naturally recollected the second Agrippina:—

Et moi, qui sur le trône ai suivi mes ancêtres :
Moi, fille, femme, sœur, et mère de vos maîtres.

²⁶ Monod. in Constantin. Jun. c. 4, ad Calceum Eutrop. edit. Havercamp. The orator styles her the most divine and pious of queens.

blind and suspicious cruelty of her husband.^a The deaths of a son and of a nephew, with the execution of a great number of respectable and perhaps innocent friends,²⁷ who were involved in their fall, may be sufficient, however, to justify the discontent of the Roman people, and to explain the satirical verses affixed to the palace-gate, comparing the splendid and bloody reigns of Constantine and Nero.²⁸

By the death of Crispus the inheritance of the empire seemed to devolve on the three sons of Fausta, who have been already mentioned under the names of Constantine, of Constantius, and of Constans. These young princes were successively invested with the title of Cæsar, and the dates of their promotion may be referred to the tenth, the twentieth, and the thirtieth years of the reign of their father.²⁹ This conduct, though it tended to multiply the future masters of the Roman world, might be excused by the partiality of paternal affection; but it is not so easy to understand the motives of the emperor, when he endangered the safety both of his family and of his people by the unnecessary elevation of his two nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus. The former was raised, by the title of Cæsar, to an equality with his cousins. In favour of the latter, Constantine invented the new and singular appellation of *Nobilissimus*,³⁰ to which he annexed the flattering distinction of a robe of purple and gold. But of the whole series of Roman princes in any age of the empire Hannibalianus alone was distinguished by the title of KING, a name which the subjects of Tiberius would have detested as the profane and cruel insult of capricious tyranny. The use of such a title, even as it appears under the reign of Constantine, is a strange and unconnected fact, which can scarcely be admitted on the joint authority of Imperial medals and contemporary writers.³¹

The sons and
nephews of
Constantine.

²⁷ Interfecit numerosos amicos. Eutrop. x. 6 [4].

²⁸ Saturni aurea sæcula quis requirat?

Sunt hæc gemmea, sed Neroniana.

Sidon. Apollinar. v. 8.

It is somewhat singular that these satirical lines should be attributed, not to an obscure libeller or a disappointed patriot, but to Ablavius, prime minister and favourite of the emperor. We may now perceive that the imprecations of the Roman people were dictated by humanity as well as by superstition. Zosim. i. ii. [c. 30] p. 105.

²⁹ Euseb. Orat. in Constantin. c. 3. These dates are sufficiently correct to justify the orator.

³⁰ Zosim. i. ii. [c. 39] p. 117. Under the predecessors of Constantine, *Nobilissimus* was a vague epithet rather than a legal and determined title.

³¹ Adstruunt nummi veteres ac singulares. Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissertat. xii. vol. ii. p. 357. Ammianus speaks of this Roman king (l. xiv. c. 1, and Valesius ad loc.). The Valesian fragment styles him King of kings; and the Paschal

^a Manso (Leben Constantins, p. 65) much contempt, considering the general treats this inference of Gibbon, and the scantiness of proof on this curious question.—M.

The whole empire was deeply interested in the education of these five youths, the acknowledged successors of Constantine. ^{Their education.} The exercises of the body prepared them for the fatigues of war and the duties of active life. Those who occasionally mention the education or talents of Constantius allow that he excelled in the gymnastic arts of leaping and running; that he was a dexterous archer, a skilful horseman, and a master of all the different weapons used in the service either of the cavalry or of the infantry.³² The same assiduous cultivation was bestowed, though not perhaps with equal success, to improve the minds of the sons and nephews of Constantine.³³ The most celebrated professors of the Christian faith, of the Grecian philosophy, and of the Roman jurisprudence, were invited by the liberality of the emperor, who reserved for himself the important task of instructing the royal youths in the science of government and the knowledge of mankind. But the genius of Constantine himself had been formed by adversity and experience. In the free intercourse of private life, and amidst the dangers of the court of Galerius, he had learned to command his own passions, to encounter those of his equals, and to depend for his present safety and future greatness on the prudence and firmness of his personal conduct. His destined successors had the misfortune of being born and educated in the Imperial purple. Incessantly surrounded with a train of flatterers, they passed their youth in the enjoyment of luxury and the expectation of a throne; nor would the dignity of their rank permit them to descend from that elevated station from whence the various characters of human nature appear to wear a smooth and uniform aspect. The indulgence of Constantine admitted them, at a very tender age, to share the administration of the empire; and they studied the art of reigning, at the expense of the people intrusted to their care. The younger Constantine was appointed to hold his court in Gaul; and

Chronicle (p. 286 [p. 228, ed. Ven.; vol. i. p. 532, ed. Bonn]), by employing the word *Πῆγε*, acquires the weight of Latin evidence.^a

³² His dexterity in martial exercises is celebrated by Julian (Orat. i. p. 11, Orat. ii. p. 53) and allowed by Ammianus (l. xxi. c. 16).

³³ Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 51. Julian, Orat. i. p. 11-16, with Spanheim's elaborate Commentary. Libanius, Orat. iii. p. 109 [ed. Paris, 1627]. Constantius studied with laudable diligence; but the dullness of his fancy prevented him from succeeding in the art of poetry, or even of rhetoric.

^a Hannibalianus is always designated in these authors by the title of king. There still exist medals struck to his honour, on which the same title is found, FL. HANNIBALLIANO REGI. See Eckhel, Doct. Num. t. viii. p. 104. Armeniam nationesque circum socias habebat, says Aur. Victor, p. 225. The writer means the Lesser Armenia. Though it is not possible to

question a fact supported by such respectable authorities, Gibbon considers it inexplicable and incredible. It is a strange abuse of the privilege of doubting to refuse all belief in a fact of such little importance in itself, and attested thus formally by contemporary authors and public monuments. St. Martin, note to Le Beau. i. 341.—M.

his brother Constantius exchanged that department, the ancient patrimony of their father, for the more opulent, but less martial, countries of the East. Italy, the Western Illyricum, and Africa, were accustomed to revere Constans, the third of his sons, as the representative of the great Constantine. He fixed Dalmatius on the Gothic frontier, to which he annexed the government of Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece. The city of Cæsarea was chosen for the residence of Hannibalianus; and the provinces of Pontus, Cappadocia, and the Lesser Armenia, were designed to form the extent of his new kingdom. For each of these princes a suitable establishment was provided. A just proportion of guards, of legions, and of auxiliaries, was allotted for their respective dignity and defence. The ministers and generals who were placed about their persons were such as Constantine could trust to assist, and even to control, these youthful sovereigns in the exercise of their delegated power. As they advanced in years and experience, the limits of their authority were insensibly enlarged: but the emperor always reserved for himself the title of Augustus; and while he showed the *Cæsars* to the armies and provinces, he maintained every part of the empire in equal obedience to its supreme head.³⁴ The tranquillity of the last fourteen years of his reign was scarcely interrupted by the contemptible insurrection of a camel-driver in the island of Cyprus,³⁵ or by the active part which the policy of Constantine engaged him to assume in the wars of the Goths and Sarmatians.

Among the different branches of the human race, the Sarmatians form a very remarkable shade; as they seem to unite the manners of the Asiatic barbarians with the figure and complex-<sup>Manners
of the
Sarmatians.</sup> plexion of the ancient inhabitants of Europe. According to the various accidents of peace and war, of alliance or conquest, the Sarmatians were sometimes confined to the banks of the Tanais, and they sometimes spread themselves over the immense plains which lie between the Vistula and the Volga.³⁶ The care of their numerous flocks and herds, the pursuit of game, and the exercise of war, or rather of rapine, directed the vagrant motions of the Sarmatians. The moveable camps or cities, the ordinary residence of their wives and children, consisted only of

³⁴ Eusebius (l. iv. c. 51, 52), with a design of exalting the authority and glory of Constantine, affirms that he divided the Roman empire as a private citizen might have divided his patrimony. His distribution of the provinces may be collected from Eutropius, the two Victors, and the Valesian fragment.

³⁵ Calocerus, the obscure leader of this rebellion, or rather tumult, was apprehended and burnt alive in the market-place of Tarsus, by the vigilance of Dalmatius. See the elder Victor, the Chronicle of Jerom, and the doubtful traditions of Theophanes and Cedrenus.

³⁶ Cellarius has collected the opinions of the ancients concerning the European and Asiatic Sarmatia; and M. d'Anville has applied them to modern geography with the skill and accuracy which always distinguish that excellent writer.

arge waggons drawn by oxen, and covered in the form of tents. The military strength of the nation was composed of cavalry; and the custom of their warriors to lead in their hand one or two spare horses enabled them to advance and to retreat with a rapid diligence, which surprised the security, and eluded the pursuit, of a distant enemy.³⁷ Their poverty of iron prompted their rude industry to invent a sort of cuirass, which was capable of resisting a sword or javelin, though it was formed only of horses' hoofs, cut into thin and polished slices, carefully laid over each other in the manner of scales or feathers, and strongly sewed upon an under garment of coarse linen.³⁸ The offensive arms of the Sarmatians were short daggers, long lances, and a weighty bow with a quiver of arrows. They were reduced to the necessity of employing fish-bones for the points of their weapons; but the custom of dipping them in a venomous liquor, that poisoned the wounds which they inflicted, is alone sufficient to prove the most savage manners; since a people impressed with a sense of humanity would have abhorred so cruel a practice, and a nation skilled in the arts of war would have disdained so impotent a resource.³⁹ Whenever these barbarians issued from their deserts in quest of prey, their shaggy beards, uncombed locks, the furs with which they were covered from head to foot, and their fierce countenances, which seemed to express the innate cruelty of their minds, inspired the more civilized provincials of Rome with horror and dismay.

The tender Ovid, after a youth spent in the enjoyment of fame and luxury, was condemned to an hopeless exile on the frozen banks of the Danube, where he was exposed, almost without defence, to the fury of these monsters of the desert, with whose stern spirits he feared that his gentle shade might hereafter be confounded. In his pathetic, but sometimes unmanly lamentations,⁴⁰ he describes in the most lively colours the dress and manners,

Their
settlement
near the
Danube.

³⁷ Ammian. l. xvii. c. 12. The Sarmatian horses were castrated to prevent the mischievous accidents which might happen from the noisy and ungovernable passions of the males.

³⁸ Pausanias, l. i. [c. 21, § 5] p. 50, edit. Kuhn. That inquisitive traveller had carefully examined a Sarmatian cuirass which was preserved in the temple of Æsculapius at Athens.

³⁹ *Aspicias et mitti sub adunco toxica ferro,
Et telum causas mortis habere duas.*

Ovid, ex Ponto, l. iv. ep. 7, ver. 11.

See in the *Recherches sur les Américains*, tom. ii. p. 236-271, a very curious dissertation on poisoned darts. The venom was commonly extracted from the vegetable reign; but that employed by the Scythians appears to have been drawn from the viper and a mixture of human blood. The use of poisoned arms, which has been spread over both worlds, never preserved a savage tribe from the arms of a disciplined enemy.

⁴⁰ The nine books of Poetical Epistles which Ovid composed during the seven first years of his melancholy exile, possess, besides the merit of elegance, a double value. They exhibit a picture of the human mind under very singular circumstances; and they contain many curious observations, which no Roman, except Ovid, could have

the arms and inroads, of the Getæ and Sarmatians, who were associated for the purposes of destruction; and from the accounts of history there is some reason to believe that these Sarmatians were the Jazygæ, one of the most numerous and warlike tribes of the nation. The allurements of plenty engaged them to seek a permanent establishment on the frontiers of the empire. Soon after the reign of Augustus they obliged the Dacians, who subsisted by fishing on the banks of the river Theiss or Tibiscus, to retire into the hilly country, and to abandon to the victorious Sarmatians the fertile plains of the Upper Hungary, which are bounded by the course of the Danube and the semicircular enclosure of the Carpathian mountains.⁴¹ In this advantageous position they watched or suspended the moment of attack, as they were provoked by injuries or appeased by presents; they gradually acquired the skill of using more dangerous weapons; and although the Sarmatians did not illustrate their name by any memorable exploits, they occasionally assisted their eastern and western neighbours, the Goths and the Germans, with a formidable body of cavalry. They lived under the irregular aristocracy of their chieftains;⁴² but after they had received into their bosom the fugitive Vandals, who yielded to the pressure of the Gothic power, they seem to have chosen a king from that nation, and from the illustrious race of the Astingi, who had formerly dwelt on the shores of the northern ocean.⁴³

This motive of enmity must have inflamed the subjects of contention which perpetually arise on the confines of warlike and independent nations. The Vandal princes were stimulated ^{The Gothic war, A.D. 331,} by fear and revenge; the Gothic kings aspired to extend their dominion from the Euxine to the frontiers of Germany; and the

an opportunity of making. Every circumstance which tends to illustrate the history of the barbarians has been drawn together by the very accurate Count de Buat, *Hist. Ancienne des Peuples de l'Europe*, tom. iv. c. xvi. p. 286-317.

⁴¹ The Sarmatian Jazygæ were settled on the banks of the Pathissus or Tibiscus, when Pliny, in the year 79, published his *Natural History*. See l. iv. c. 25. In the time of Strabo and Ovid, sixty or seventy years before, they appear to have inhabited beyond the Getæ, along the coast of the Euxine.

⁴² *Principes Sarmatarum Jazygum penes quos civitatis regimen . . . plebem quoque et vim equitum, quâ solâ valent, offerebant.* Tacit. *Hist.* iii. 5. This offer was made in the civil war between Vitellius and Vespasian.

⁴³ This hypothesis of a Vandal king reigning over Sarmatian subjects seems necessary to reconcile the Goth Jornandes with the Greek and Latin historians of Constantine. It may be observed that Isidore, who lived in Spain under the dominion of the Goths, gives them for enemies, not the Vandals, but the Sarmatians. See his *Chronicle* in Grotius, p. 709.^a

^a It is now generally admitted that the Sarmatians were Slavonians. They are first mentioned by Herodotus (iv. 21, 110, *seq.*) under the name of Sauromatæ, and their name is identified in the most ancient Slavic chronicles with Srb, Sirb, or Servians. Schafarik, it is true, denies that the Sarmatians were Slavonians, but though an authority on the history and antiquities

of his race, his views have been generally rejected. The two most powerful Sarmatian tribes were the Roxolani and Jazyges: the name of the latter is probably the Slavonian word *jazyk*, "speech, language." Niebuhr, *Kleine Schriften*, vol. i. p. 394; Neumann, *Die Völker des südlichen Russlands*, p. 13; Schafarik, *Slawische Alterthümer*, vol. i. p. 368, *seq.*—S.

waters of the Maros, a small river which falls into the Theiss, were stained with the blood of the contending barbarians. After some experience of the superior strength and numbers of their adversaries, the Sarmatians implored the protection of the Roman monarch, who beheld with pleasure the discord of the nations, but who was justly alarmed by the progress of the Gothic arms. As soon as Constantine had declared himself in favour of the weaker party, the haughty Araric, king of the Goths, instead of expecting the attack of the legions, boldly passed the Danube, and spread terror and devastation through the province of Mæsia. To oppose the inroad of this destroying host the aged emperor took the field in person; but on this occasion either his conduct or his fortune betrayed the glory which he had acquired in so many foreign and domestic wars. He had the mortification of seeing his troops fly before an inconsiderable detachment of the barbarians, who pursued them to the edge of their fortified camp, and obliged him to consult his safety by a precipitate and ignominious retreat.^a The event of a second and more successful action retrieved the honour of the Roman name; and the powers of art and discipline prevailed, after an obstinate contest, over the efforts of irregular valour. The broken army of the Goths abandoned the field of battle, the wasted province, and the passage of the Danube:

A.D. 332.
April 20.

and although the eldest of the sons of Constantine was permitted to supply the place of his father, the merit of the victory, which diffused universal joy, was ascribed to the auspicious counsels of the emperor himself.

He contributed at least to improve this advantage by his negotiations with the free and warlike people of Chersonesus,⁴⁴ whose capital,

⁴⁴ I may stand in need of some apology for having used, without scruple, the authority of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in all that relates to the wars and negotiations of the Chersonites. I am aware that he was a Greek of the tenth century, and that his accounts of ancient history are frequently confused and fabulous. But on this occasion his narrative is, for the most part, consistent and probable; nor is there much difficulty in conceiving that an emperor might have access to some secret archives which had escaped the diligence of meaner historians. For the situation and history of Chersone, see l'cyssonel, des Peuples barbares qui ont habité les Bords du Danube, c. xvi. 84-90.^b

^a Gibbon states that Constantine was defeated by the Goths in a first battle. No ancient author mentions such an event. It is, no doubt, a mistake in Gibbon. St. Martin, note to Le Beau, i. 324.—M.

^b Gibbon has confounded the inhabitants of the city of Cherson, the ancient Chersonesus, with the people of the Chersonesus Taurica. If he had read with more attention the chapter of Constantinus Porphyrogenitus from which this narrative is derived, he would have seen that the author clearly distinguishes the republic of Cherson from the rest of the

Tauric peninsula, then possessed by the kings of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, and that the city of Cherson alone furnished succours to the Romans. The English historian is also mistaken in saying that the Stephanephoros of the Chersonites was a perpetual magistrate: since it is easy to discover, from the great number of Stephanephoroi mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, that they were annual magistrates, like almost all those which governed the Grecian republics. St. Martin, note to Le Beau, i. 326.—M.

situate on the western coast of the Tauric or Crimæan peninsula, still retained some vestiges of a Grecian colony, and was governed by a perpetual magistrate, assisted by a council of senators, emphatically styled the Fathers of the City. The Chersonites were animated against the Goths by the memory of the wars which, in the preceding century, they had maintained with unequal forces against the invaders of their country. They were connected with the Romans by the mutual benefits of commerce; as they were supplied from the provinces of Asia with corn and manufactures, which they purchased with their only productions, salt, wax, and hides. Obedient to the requisition of Constantine, they prepared, under the conduct of their magistrate Diogenes, a considerable army, of which the principal strength consisted in cross-bows and military chariots. The speedy march and intrepid attack of the Chersonites, by diverting the attention of the Goths, assisted the operations of the Imperial generals. The Goths, vanquished on every side, were driven into the mountains, where, in the course of a severe campaign, above an hundred thousand were computed to have perished by cold and hunger. Peace was at length granted to their humble supplications; the eldest son of Araric was accepted as the most valuable hostage; and Constantine endeavoured to convince their chiefs, by a liberal distribution of honours and rewards, how far the friendship of the Romans was preferable to their enmity. In the expressions of his gratitude towards the faithful Chersonites, the emperor was still more magnificent. The pride of the nation was gratified by the splendid and almost royal decorations bestowed on their magistrate and his successors. A perpetual exemption from all duties was stipulated for their vessels which traded to the ports of the Black Sea. A regular subsidy was promised, of iron, corn, oil, and of every supply which could be useful either in peace or war. But it was thought that the Sarmatians were sufficiently rewarded by their deliverance from impending ruin; and the emperor, perhaps with too strict an economy, deducted some part of the expenses of the war from the customary gratifications which were allowed to that turbulent nation.

Exasperated by this apparent neglect, the Sarmatians soon forgot, with the levity of barbarians, the services which they had so lately received, and the dangers which still threatened their safety. Their inroads on the territory of the empire provoked the indignation of Constantine to leave them to their fate; and he no longer opposed the ambition of Geberic, a renowned warrior, who had recently ascended the Gothic throne. Wisumar, the Vandal king, whilst, alone and unassisted, he defended his dominions with undaunted courage, was vanquished and slain in a

Expulsion
of the
Sarmatians,
A.D. 334.

decisive battle which swept away the flower of the Sarmatian youth.^a The remainder of the nation embraced the desperate expedient of arming their slaves, a hardy race of hunters and herdsmen, by whose tumultuary aid they revenged their defeat, and expelled the invader from their confines. But they soon discovered that they had exchanged a foreign for a domestic enemy, more dangerous and more implacable. Enraged by their former servitude, elated by their present glory, the slaves, under the name of Limigantes, claimed and usurped the possession of the country which they had saved. Their masters, unable to withstand the ungoverned fury of the populace, preferred the hardships of exile to the tyranny of their servants. Some of the fugitive Sarmatians solicited a less ignominious dependence under the hostile standard of the Goths. A more numerous band retired beyond the Carpathian mountains, among the Quadi, their German allies, and were easily admitted to share a superfluous waste of uncultivated land. But the far greater part of the distressed nation turned their eyes towards the fruitful provinces of Rome. Imploring the protection and forgiveness of the emperor, they solemnly promised, as subjects in peace, and as soldiers in war, the most inviolable fidelity to the empire which should graciously receive them into its bosom. According to the maxims adopted by Probus and his successors, the offers of this barbarian colony were eagerly accepted; and a competent portion of lands in the provinces of Pannonia, Thrace, Macedonia, and Italy, were immediately assigned for the habitation and subsistence of three hundred thousand Sarmatians.⁴⁵

By chastising the pride of the Goths, and by accepting the homage of a suppliant nation, Constantine asserted the majesty of the Roman empire; and the ambassadors of Æthiopia, Persia, and the most remote countries of India, congratulated the peace and prosperity of his government.⁴⁶ If he reckoned

Death and
funeral of
Constantine,
A.D. 335.
July 25.

⁴⁵ The Gothic and Sarmatian wars are related in so broken and imperfect a manner, that I have been obliged to compare the following writers, who mutually supply, correct, and illustrate each other. Those who will take the same trouble may acquire a right of criticising my narrative. Ammianus, l. xvii. c. 12. Anonym. Valesian. p. 715. Rutilius, x. 7 [4]. Sextus Rufus de Provinciis, c. 26. Julian, Orat. i. p. 9, and Spanheim, Comment. p. 94. Hieronym. in Chron. Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 6. Socrates, l. i. c. 18. Sozomen, l. i. c. 8. Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 21] p. 108. Jordanes de Reb. Geticis, c. 22. Isidorus in Chron. p. 709; in Hist. Gothorum Grotii. Constantin. Porphyrogenitus de Administrat. Imperii, c. 53, p. 208, edit. Meursii^b [p. 144 sqq. ed. Paris; vol. iii. p. 244 sqq. ed. Bonn].

⁴⁶ Eusebius (in Vit. Const. l. iv. c. 50) remarks three circumstances relative to these

^a Gibbon supposes that this war took place because Constantine had deducted a part of the customary gratifications granted by his predecessors to the Sarmatians. Nothing of this kind appears in the authors. We see, on the contrary, that after his victory, and to punish the

Sarmatians for the ravages they had committed, he withheld the sums which it had been the custom to bestow. St. Martin, note to Le Beau, i. 327.—M.

^b Compare, on this very obscure but remarkable war, Mauso, Leben Constantins, p. 195.—M.

among the favours of fortune the death of his eldest son, of his nephew, and perhaps of his wife, he enjoyed an uninterrupted flow of private as well as public felicity till the thirtieth year of his reign; a period which none of his predecessors, since Augustus, had been permitted to celebrate. Constantine survived that solemn festival about ten months; and, at the mature age of sixty-four, after a short illness, he ended his memorable life at the palace of Aquyri^{on},^a in the suburbs of Nicomedia, whither he had retired for the benefit of the air, and with the hope of recruiting his exhausted strength by the use of the warm baths. The excessive demonstrations of grief, or at least of mourning, surpassed whatever had been practised on any former occasion. Notwithstanding the claims of the senate and people of ancient Rome, the corpse of the deceased emperor, according to his last request, was transported to the city which was destined to preserve the name and memory of its founder. The body of Constantine, adorned with the vain symbols of greatness, the purple and diadem, was deposited on a golden bed in one of the apartments of the palace, which for that purpose had been splendidly furnished and illuminated. The forms of the court were strictly maintained. Every day, at the appointed hours, the principal officers of the state, the army, and the household, approaching the person of their sovereign with bended knees and a composed countenance, offered their respectful homage as seriously as if he had been still alive. From motives of policy, this theatrical representation was for some time continued; nor could flattery neglect the opportunity of remarking that Constantine alone, by the peculiar indulgence of Heaven, had reigned after his death.⁴⁷

A.D. 337.
May 22.

But this reign could subsist only in empty pageantry; and it was soon discovered that the will of the most absolute monarch is seldom obeyed when his subjects have no longer anything to hope from his favour, or to dread from his resentment. The same ministers and generals who bowed with such reverential awe before the inanimate corpse of their deceased sovereign were engaged in secret consultations to exclude his two nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, from the share which he had assigned them in the

Factions of
the court.

Indians. 1. They came from the shores of the eastern ocean; a description which might be applied to the coast of China or Coromandel. 2. They presented shining gems and unknown animals. 3. They protested their kings had erected statues to represent the supreme majesty of Constantine.

⁴⁷ *Funus relatum in urbem sui nominis, quod sane P. R. ægerrime tulit. Aurelius Victor [de Cæsar. c. 41].* Constantine prepared for himself a stately tomb in the church of the Holy Apostles. Euseb. l. iv. c. 60. The best, and indeed almost the only account of the sickness, death, and funeral of Constantine, is contained in the fourth book of his Life by Eusebius.

* Called Achyron by St. Jerome (Chron. anno 2353), and Achiron by Victor.—S.

succession of the empire. We are too imperfectly acquainted with the court of Constantine to form any judgment of the real motives which influenced the leaders of the conspiracy; unless we should suppose that they were actuated by a spirit of jealousy and revenge against the præfect Ablavius, a proud favourite, who had long directed the counsels and abused the confidence of the late emperor. The arguments by which they solicited the concurrence of the soldiers and people are of a more obvious nature: and they might with decency, as well as truth, insist on the superior rank of the children of Constantine, the danger of multiplying the number of sovereigns, and the impending mischiefs which threatened the republic, from the discord of so many rival princes who were not connected by the tender sympathy of fraternal affection. The intrigue was conducted with zeal and secrecy, till a loud and unanimous declaration was procured from the troops that they would suffer none except the sons of their lamented monarch to reign over the Roman empire.⁴⁸ The younger Dalmatius, who was united with his collateral relations by the ties of friendship and interest, is allowed to have inherited a considerable share of the abilities of the great Constantine; but, on this occasion, he does not appear to have concerted any measures for supporting by arms the just claims which himself and his royal brother derived from the liberality of their uncle. Astonished and overwhelmed by the tide of popular fury, they seem to have remained, without the power of flight or of resistance, in the hands of their implacable enemies. Their fate was suspended till the arrival of Constantius, the second,⁴⁹ and perhaps the most favoured, of the sons of Constantine.

The voice of the dying emperor had recommended the care of his funeral to the piety of Constantius; and that prince, by the vicinity of his eastern station, could easily prevent the diligence of his brothers, who resided in their distant government of Italy and Gaul. As soon as he had taken possession of the palace of Constantinople, his first care was to remove the apprehensions of his kinsmen, by a solemn oath which he pledged for their security. His next employment was to find some specious pretence which might release his conscience from the obligation of an imprudent promise. The arts of fraud were made subservient to the designs of cruelty; and a manifest forgery was attested by a person of the most sacred

Massacre of
the princes.

⁴⁸ Eusebius (l. iv. c. 68) terminates his narrative by this loyal declaration of the troops, and avoids all the invidious circumstances of the subsequent massacre.

⁴⁹ The character of Dalmatius is advantageously, though concisely, drawn by Eutropius (x. 9 [5]). Dalmatius Caesar prosperrimâ indole, neque patruo absimilis. *haud multo post oppressus est factione militari.* As both Jerom and the Alexandrian Chronicle mention the third year of the Cæsar, which did not commence till the 18th or 24th of September, A.D. 337, it is certain that these military factions continued above four months.

character. From the hands of the bishop of Nicomedia, Constantius received a fatal scroll, affirmed to be the genuine testament of his father; in which the emperor expressed his suspicions that he had been poisoned by his brothers; and conjured his sons to revenge his death, and to consult their own safety, by the punishment of the guilty.⁵⁰ Whatever reasons might have been alleged by these unfortunate princes to defend their life and honour against so incredible an accusation, they were silenced by the furious clamours of the soldiers, who declared themselves, at once, their enemies, their judges, and their executioners. The spirit, and even the forms, of legal proceedings were repeatedly violated in a promiscuous massacre; which involved the two uncles of Constantius, seven of his cousins, of whom Dalmatius and Hannibalianus were the most illustrious, the Patrician Optatus, who had married a sister of the late emperor, and the præfect Ablavius, whose power and riches had inspired him with some hopes of obtaining the purple. If it were necessary to aggravate the horrors of this bloody scene, we might add that Constantius himself had espoused the daughter of his uncle Julius, and that he had bestowed his sister in marriage on his cousin Hannibalianus. These alliances, which the policy of Constantine, regardless of the public prejudice,⁵¹ had formed between the several branches of the Imperial house, served only to convince mankind that these princes were as cold to the endearments of conjugal affection, as they were insensible to the ties of consanguinity and the moving entreaties of youth and innocence. Of so numerous a family, Gallus and Julian alone, the two youngest children of Julius Constantius, were saved from the hands of the assassins, till their rage, satiated with slaughter, had in some measure subsided. The emperor Constantius, who, in

⁵⁰ I have related this singular anecdote on the authority of Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 16. But if such a pretext was ever used by Constantius and his adherents, it was laid aside with contempt as soon as it served their immediate purpose. Athanasius (tom. i. p. 856) [ad Monach. c. 69, tom. i. p. 304, ed. Bened. Petav. 1777] mentions the oath which Constantius had taken for the security of his kinsmen.*

⁵¹ *Conjugia sobrinarum diu ignorata, tempore addito percrebuisse.* Tacit. Annal. xii. 6, and Lipsius ad loc. The repeal of the ancient law, and the practice of five hundred years, were insufficient to eradicate the prejudices of the Romans, who still considered the marriages of cousins-german as a species of imperfect incest (Augustin de Civitate Dei, xv. 6); and Julian, whose mind was biassed by superstition and resentment, stigmatises these unnatural alliances between his own cousins with the opprobrious epithet of *γαμῶν τε οὐ γαμῶν* (Orat. vii. p. 228). The jurisprudence of the canons has since revived and enforced this prohibition, without being able to introduce it either into the civil or the common law of Europe. See, on the subject of these marriages, Taylor's Civil Law, p. 331; Brouer, de Jure Connub. l. ii. c. 12; Hericourt, des Loix Ecclésiastiques, part iii. c. 5; Fleury, Institutions du Droit Canonique, tom. i. p. 331, Paris, 1767; and Fra Paolo, Istoria del Concilio Trident. l. viii.

* The authority of Philostorgius is so suspicious as not to be sufficient to establish this fact, which Gibbon has inserted in his history as certain, while in the note he appears to doubt it.—G.

the absence of his brothers, was the most obnoxious to guilt and reproach, discovered, on some future occasions, a faint and transient remorse for those cruelties which the perfidious counsels of his ministers, and the irresistible violence of the troops, had extorted from his unexperienced youth.⁵²

The massacre of the Flavian race was succeeded by a new division of the provinces, which was ratified in a personal interview of the three brothers. Constantine, the eldest of the Cæsars, obtained, with a certain pre-eminence of rank, the possession of the new capital, which bore his own name and that of his father. Thrace and the countries of the East were allotted for the patrimony of Constantius; and Constans was acknowledged as the lawful sovereign of Italy, Africa, and the western Illyricum. The armies submitted to their hereditary right, and they condescended, after some delay, to accept from the Roman senate the title of *Augustus*. When they first assumed the reins of government, the eldest of these princes was twenty-one, the second twenty, and the third only seventeen, years of age.⁵³

While the martial nations of Europe followed the standards of his brothers, Constantius, at the head of the effeminate troops of Asia, was left to sustain the weight of the Persian war. At the decease of Constantine, the throne of the East was filled by Sapor, son of Hormouz, or Hormisdas, and grandson of Narses, who, after the victory of Galerius, had humbly confessed the superiority of the Roman power. Although Sapor was in the thirtieth year of his long reign, he was still in the vigour of youth, as the date of his accession, by a very strange fatality, had preceded that of his birth. The wife of Hormouz remained pregnant at the time of her husband's death, and the uncertainty of the sex, as well as of the event, excited the ambitious hopes of the princes of the house of Sassan. The apprehensions of civil war were at length removed by the positive assurance of the Magi that the widow of Hormouz had conceived, and would safely produce a son. Obedient to the voice of superstition, the Persians prepared, without delay, the ceremony of his coronation. A royal bed, on which the queen lay in state, was exhibited in the midst of the palace; the diadem was placed on the

Sapor, King
of Persia.
A.D. 310.

⁵² Julian (ad S.P.Q. Athen. p. 270) charges his cousin Constantius with the whole guilt of a massacre from which he himself so narrowly escaped. His assertion is confirmed by Athanasius, who, for reasons of a very different nature, was not less an enemy of Constantius (tom. i. p. 856 [tom. i. p. 304, ed. Bened.]). Zosimus [ii. 40] joins in the same accusation. But the three abbreviators, Eutropius and the Victors, use very qualifying expressions:—"sinente potius quam jubente;" "incertum quo auctore;" "vi militum."

⁵³ Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 69. Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 39] p. 117. Idat. in Chron. See two notes of Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 1086-1091. The reign of the eldest brother at Constantinople is noticed only in the Alexandrian Chronicle.

spot which might be supposed to conceal the future heir of Artaxerxes, and the prostrate satraps adored the majesty of their invisible and insensible sovereign.⁵⁴ If any credit can be given to this marvellous tale, which seems, however, to be countenanced by the manners of the people and by the extraordinary duration of his reign, we must admire not only the fortune but the genius of Sapor. In the soft sequestered education of a Persian harem the royal youth could discover the importance of exercising the vigour of his mind and body, and by his personal merit deserved a throne on which he had been seated while he was yet unconscious of the duties and temptations of absolute power. His minority was exposed to the almost inevitable calamities of domestic discord; his capital was surprised and plundered by Thair, a powerful king of Yemen or Arabia, and the majesty of the royal family was degraded by the captivity of a princess, the sister of the deceased king. But as soon as Sapor attained the age of manhood the presumptuous Thair, his nation, and his country, fell beneath the first effort of the young warrior, who used his victory with so judicious a mixture of rigour and clemency that he obtained from the fears and gratitude of the Arabs the title of *Dhoulacnaf*, or protector of the nation.⁵⁵

The ambition of the Persian, to whom his enemies ascribe the virtues of a soldier and a statesman, was animated by the desire of revenging the disgrace of his fathers, and of State of
Mesopotamia
and Armenia. wresting from the hands of the Romans the five provinces beyond the Tigris. The military fame of Constantine, and the real or apparent strength of his government, suspended the attack, and, while the hostile conduct of Sapor provoked the resentment, his artful negotiations amused the patience of the Imperial court. The death of Constantine was the signal of war,⁵⁶ and the actual condition of

⁵⁴ Agathias, who lived in the sixth century, is the author of this story (l. iv. p. 135, edit. Louvre [c. 25, p. 262, ed. Bonn]). He derived his information from some extracts of the Persian Chronicles, obtained and translated by the interpreter Sergius during his embassy at that court. The coronation of the mother of Sapor is likewise mentioned by Schikard (Tarikh, p. 116) and d'Herbelot (Bibliothèque Orientale, 763).^a

⁵⁵ D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, p. 764.^b

⁵⁶ Sextus Rufus (c. 26), who on this occasion is no contemptible authority, affirms that the Persians sued in vain for peace, and that Constantine was preparing to march

^a The author of the Zenut-ul-Tarikh states that the lady herself affirmed her belief of this from the extraordinary liveliness of the infant, and its lying on the right side. Those who are sage on such subjects must determine what right she had to be positive from these symptoms. Malcolm, Hist. of Persia, i. 83.—M.

^b Gibbon, according to Sir J. Malcolm, has greatly mistaken the derivation of this

name; it means Zoolaktaf, the Lord of the Shoulders, from his directing the shoulder of his captives to be pierced and then dislocated by a string passed through them. Eastern authors are agreed with respect to the origin of this title. Malcolm, i. 84. Gibbon took his derivation from d'Herbelot, who gives both, the latter on the authority of the Leb. Tarikh.—M.

the Syrian and Armenian frontier seemed to encourage the Persians by the prospect of a rich spoil and an easy conquest. The example of the massacres of the palace diffused a spirit of licentiousness and sedition among the troops of the East, who were no longer restrained by their habits of obedience to a veteran commander. By the prudence of Constantius, who, from the interview with his brothers in Pannonia, immediately hastened to the banks of the Euphrates, the legions were gradually restored to a sense of duty and discipline; but the season of anarchy had permitted Sapor to form the siege of Nisibis, and to occupy several of the most important fortresses of Mesopotamia.⁵⁷ In Armenia the renowned Tiridates had long enjoyed the peace and glory which he deserved by his valour and fidelity to the cause of Rome.^b The firm alliance which he maintained with Constantine was productive of spiritual as well as of temporal benefits; by the conversion of Tiridates the character of a saint was applied to that of a hero, the Christian faith was preached and established from the Euphrates to the shores of the Caspian, and Armenia was attached to the empire by the double ties of policy and of religion. But as many of the Armenian nobles still refused to abandon the plurality of their gods and of their wives, the public tranquillity was disturbed by a discontented faction, which insulted the feeble age of their sovereign, and impatiently expected the hour of his death. He died at length, after a reign of fifty-six years, and the fortune of the Armenian monarchy expired with Tiridates. His lawful heir was driven into exile, the Christian priests were either murdered or expelled from their churches, the barbarous tribes of Albania were solicited to descend from their mountains, and two of the most powerful governors, usurping the ensigns or the powers of royalty, implored the assistance of Sapor, and opened the gates of their cities to the Persian garrisons. The Christian party, under the guidance of the archbishop of Artaxata, the immediate successor of St. Gregory the Illuminator, had recourse to the piety of Constantius. After the troubles had continued about three years, Antiochus, one of the officers of the household, executed

A.D. 342.
A.D. 314.
St. M.

against them: yet the superior weight of the testimony of Eusebius obliges us to admit the preliminaries, if not the ratification, of the treaty. See Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 420.^a

⁵⁷ Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 20.

^a Constantine had endeavoured to allay the fury of the persecutions which, at the instigation of the Magi and the Jews, Sapor had commenced against the Christians. Euseb. *Vit. Hist. Theod.* i. 25. *Sozom.* ii. c. 8, 15.—M.

^b Tiridates had sustained a war against Maximin, caused by the hatred of the

latter against Christianity. Armenia was the first nation which embraced Christianity. About the year 276 it was the religion of the king, the nobles, and the people of Armenia. From St. Martin, *Supplement to Le Beau*, v. i. p. 78. Compare Preface to History of Vartan, by Professor Neumann, p. ix.—M.

with success the Imperial commission of restoring Chosroes, the son of Tiridates, to the throne of his fathers, of distributing honours and rewards among the faithful servants of the house of Arsaces, and of proclaiming a general amnesty, which was accepted by the greater part of the rebellious satraps. But the Romans derived more honour than advantage from this revolution. Chosroes was a prince of a puny stature and a pusillanimous spirit. Unequal to the fatigues of war, averse to the society of mankind, he withdrew from his capital to a retired palace, which he built on the banks of the river Eleutherus, and in the centre of a shady grove, where he consumed his vacant hours in the rural sports of hunting and hawking. To secure this inglorious ease, he submitted to the conditions of peace which Sapor condescended to impose: the payment of an annual tribute, and the restitution of the fertile province of Atropatene, which the courage of Tiridates and the victorious arms of Galerius had annexed to the Armenian monarchy.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 20, 21. Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 89, l. iii. c. 1-9, p. 226-240. The perfect agreement between the vague hints of the contemporary orator and the circumstantial narrative of the national historian, gives light to the former and weight to the latter. For the credit of Moses it may be likewise observed that the name of Antiochus is found a few years before in a civil office of inferior dignity. See Godefroy, *Cod. Theod.* tom. vi. p. 350.^a

* "Gibbon has endeavoured in his History to make use of the information furnished by Moses of Chorene, the only Armenian historian then translated into Latin. Gibbon has not perceived all the chronological difficulties which occur in the narrative of that writer. He has not thought of all the critical discussions which his text ought to undergo before it can be combined with the relations of the western writers. From want of this attention Gibbon has made the facts which he has drawn from this source more erroneous than they are in the original. This judgment applies to all which the English historian has derived from the Armenian author. I have made the History of Moses a subject of particular attention; and it is with confidence that I offer the results, which I insert here, and which will appear in the course of my notes. In order to form a judgment of the difference which exists between me and Gibbon, I will content myself with remarking that throughout he has committed an anachronism of thirty years, from whence it follows that he assigns to the reign of Constantius many events which took place during that of Constantine. He could not therefore discern the true connection which exists between the Roman history and that of Armenia, or form a correct notion of the

reasons which induced Constantine, at the close of his life, to make war upon the Persians, or of the motives which detained Constantius so long in the East; he does not even mention them."—St. Martin, note on *Le Beau*, vol. i. p. 406.

The following is St. Martin's account of this period of Armenian history. Tiridates, the first Christian king of Armenia, died in A.D. 314, and his son Chosroes II. was placed on the throne by a Roman army commanded by Antiochus. This was during the reign of Licinius in the East. Chosroes was succeeded in 322 by his son Diran. Diran was a weak prince, and in the sixteenth year of his reign, A.D. 337, was betrayed into the power of Sapor, the Persian king, by the treachery of his chamberlain and the Persian governor of Atropatene or Aderbaidjan. He was blinded: his wife and his son Arsaces shared his captivity, but the princes and nobles of Armenia claimed the protection of Rome. Constantine espoused their cause and declared war against the Persians, but he died almost immediately afterwards. The war, however, was carried on by his son Constantius. The king of Persia attempted to make himself master of Armenia, but the brave resistance of the people, the advance of Constantius, and a defeat which his army suffered at Oskia

During the long period of the reign of Constantius the provinces of the East were afflicted by the calamities of the Persian war.^a The irregular incursions of the light troops alternately spread terror and devastation beyond the Tigris and beyond the Euphrates, from the gates of Ctesiphon to those of Antioch; and this active service was performed by the Arabs of the desert, who were divided in their interest and affections, some of their independent chiefs being enlisted in the party of Sapor, whilst others had engaged their doubtful fidelity to the emperor.⁵⁹ The more grave and important operations of the war were conducted with equal vigour; and the armies of Rome and Persia encountered each other in nine bloody fields, in two of which Constantius himself commanded in person.⁶⁰ The event of the day was most commonly adverse to the Romans, but in the battle of Singara their imprudent valour had almost achieved a signal and decisive victory. The stationary troops of Singara^b retired on the approach of Sapor, who passed the Tigris over three bridges, and occupied near the village of Hilleh an advantageous camp, which, by the labour of his numerous pioneers, he surrounded in one day with a deep ditch and a lofty rampart. His formidable host, when it was drawn out in order of battle, covered the banks of the river, the

The Persian
war,
A.D. 337-360.

Battle of
Singara.
A.D. 348.

⁵⁹ Ammianus (xiv. 4) gives a lively description of the wandering and predatory life of the Saracens, who stretched from the confines of Assyria to the cataracts of the Nile. It appears from the adventures of Malchus, which Jerom has related in so entertaining a manner, that the high road between Beræa and Edessa was infested by these robbers. See Hieronym. tom. i. p. 256.

⁶⁰ We shall take from Eutropius the general idea of the war (x. 10 [6]). A Persis enim multa et gravia perpressus, sæpe captis oppidis, obsessis urbibus, cæcis exercitibus, nullumque ei contra Saporem prosperum prælium fuit, nisi quod apud Singaram, &c. This honest account is confirmed by the hints of Ammianus, Rufus, and Jerom. The two first orations of Julian, and the third oration of Libanius, exhibit a more flattering picture; but the recantation of both those orators after the death of Constantius, while it restores us to the possession of the truth, degrades their own character and that of the emperor. The commentary of Spanheim on the first oration of Julian is profusely learned. See likewise the judicious observations of Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 656.

in Armenia, and the failure before Nisibis, forced Shabpour to submit to terms of peace. Diran and his son were released from captivity; but Diran refused to ascend the throne, and retired to an obscure retreat, and his son Arsaces was crowned king of Armenia. Arsaces pursued a vacillating policy between the influence of Rome and Persia, and the war recommenced in the year 345. At least that was the period of the expedition of Constantius to the East. See St. Martin, additions to Le Beau, vol. i. pp. 406, seq., 442, seq.—Abridged from M.

flatterer (whose name is unknown) published the Itinerraries of Alexander and Trajan, in order to direct the victorious Constantius in the footsteps of those great conquerors of the East. The former of these has been published for the first time by M. Angelo Mai (Milan, 1817, reprinted at Frankfurt, 1818). It adds so little to our knowledge of Alexander's campaigns, that it only excites our regret that it is not the Itinerary of Trajan, of whose eastern victories we have no distinct record.—M.

^b On the site of Singara, see note, vol. ii. p. 87.—S

It was during this war that a bold

adjacent heights, and the whole extent of a plain of above twelve miles which separated the two armies. Both were alike impatient to engage, but the barbarians, after a slight resistance, fled in disorder, unable to resist, or desirous to weary, the strength of the heavy legions, who, fainting with heat and thirst, pursued them across the plain, and cut in pieces a line of cavalry clothed in complete armour, which had been posted before the gates of the camp to protect their retreat. Constantius, who was hurried along in the pursuit, attempted, without effect, to restrain the ardour of his troops, by representing to them the dangers of the approaching night, and the certainty of completing their success with the return of day. As they depended much more on their own valour than on the experience or the abilities of their chief, they silenced by their clamours his timid remonstrances, and, rushing with fury to the charge, filled up the ditch, broke down the rampart, and dispersed themselves through the tents to recruit their exhausted strength, and to enjoy the rich harvest of their labours. But the prudent Sapor had watched the moment of victory. His army, of which the greater part, securely posted on the heights, had been spectators of the action, advanced in silence and under the shadow of the night, and his Persian archers, guided by the illumination of the camp, poured a shower of arrows on a disarmed and licentious crowd. The sincerity of history⁶¹ declares that the Romans were vanquished with a dreadful slaughter, and that the flying remnant of the legions was exposed to the most intolerable hardships. Even the tenderness of panegyric, confessing that the glory of the emperor was sullied by the disobedience of his soldiers, chooses to draw a veil over the circumstances of this melancholy retreat. Yet one of those venal orators, so jealous of the fame of Constantius, relates, with amazing coolness, an act of such incredible cruelty, as, in the judgment of posterity, must imprint a far deeper stain on the honour of the Imperial name. The son of Sapor, the heir of his crown, had been made a captive in the Persian camp. The unhappy youth, who might have excited the compassion of the most savage enemy, was scourged, tortured, and publicly executed by the inhuman Romans.⁶²

Whatever advantages might attend the arms of Sapor in the field,

⁶¹ *Acerrimâ nocturnâ concertatione pugnatum est, nostrorum copiis ingenti strage confossis.* Ammian. xviii. 5. See likewise Eutropius, x. 10 [6], and S. Rufus, c. 27.^a

⁶² Libanius, *Orat.* iii. p. 133, with Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 24, and Spanheim's Commentary, p. 179.

^a The Persian historians, or romancers, do not mention the battle of Singara, but make the captive Shahpour escape, defeat, and take prisoner, the Roman emperor.

The Roman captives were forced to repair all the ravages they had committed, even to replanting the smallest trees. Malcclm, i. 85.—M.

though nine repeated victories diffused among the nations the fame of his valour and conduct, he could not hope to succeed in the execution of his designs while the fortified towns of Mesopotamia, and, above all, the strong and ancient city of Nisibis, remained in the possession of the Romans. In the space of twelve years Nisibis, which, since the time of Lucullus, had been deservedly esteemed the bulwark of the East, sustained three memorable sieges against the power of Sapor ; and the disappointed monarch, after urging his attacks above sixty, eighty, and an hundred days, was thrice repulsed with loss and ignominy.⁶³ This large and populous city was situate about two days' journey from the Tigris, in the midst of a pleasant and fertile plain at the foot of Mount Masius. A treble enclosure of brick walls was defended by a deep ditch ;⁶⁴ and the intrepid resistance of Count Lucilianus and his garrison was seconded by the desperate courage of the people. The citizens of Nisibis were animated by the exhortations of their bishop,⁶⁵ inured to arms by the presence of danger, and convinced of the intentions of Sapor to plant a Persian colony in their room, and to lead them away into distant and barbarous captivity. The event of the two former sieges elated their confidence and exasperated the haughty spirit of the Great King, who advanced a third time towards Nisibis, at the head of the united forces of Persia and India. The ordinary machines, invented to batter or undermine the walls, were rendered ineffectual by the superior skill of the Romans, and many days had vainly elapsed when Sapor embraced a resolution worthy of an eastern monarch who believed that the elements themselves were subject to his power. At the stated season of the melting of the snows in Armenia, the river Mygdonius, which divides the plain and the city of Nisibis, forms, like the Nile,⁶⁶ an inundation over the adjacent

⁶³ See Julian, *Orat. i.* p. 27; *Orat. ii.* p. 62, &c.; with the Commentary of Spanheim (p. 188–202), who illustrates the circumstances, and ascertains the time of the three sieges of Nisibis. Their dates are likewise examined by Tillmont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 668, 671, 674). Something is added from Zosimus, l. iii. [c. 8] p. 151, and the Alexandrian Chronicle, p. 290.

⁶⁴ Sallust. Fragment. lxxxiv. edit. Brosses, and Plutarch in Lucull. [c. 32] tom. iii. p. 184. Nisibis is now reduced to one hundred and fifty houses; the marshy lands produce rice, and the fertile meadows, as far as Mosul and the Tigris, are covered with the ruins of towns and villages. See Niebuhr, *Voyages*, tom. ii. p. 300–309.

⁶⁵ The miracles which Theodoret (l. ii. c. 30) ascribes to St. James, bishop of Edessa, were at least performed in a worthy cause, the defence of his country. He appeared on the walls under the figure of the Roman emperor, and sent an army of gnats to sting the trunks of the elephants, and to discomfit the host of the new Senacherib.

⁶⁶ Julian. *Orat. i.* p. 27. Though Niebuhr (tom. ii. p. 307) allows a very considerable swell to the Mygdonius, over which he saw a bridge of *twelve* arches; it is difficult, however, to understand this parallel of a trifling rivulet with a mighty river. There are many circumstances obscure, and almost unintelligible, in the description of these stupendous waterworks.

country. By the labour of the Persians the course of the river was stopped below the town, and the waters were confined on every side by solid mounds of earth. On this artificial lake a fleet of armed vessels, filled with soldiers, and with engines which discharged stones of five hundred pounds weight, advanced in order of battle, and engaged, almost upon a level, the troops which defended the ramparts.^a The irresistible force of the waters was alternately fatal to the contending parties, till at length a portion of the walls, unable to sustain the accumulated pressure, gave way at once, and exposed an ample breach of one hundred and fifty feet. The Persians were instantly driven to the assault, and the fate of Nisibis depended on the event of the day. The heavy-armed cavalry, who led the van of a deep column, were embarrassed in the mud, and great numbers were drowned in the unseen holes which had been filled by the rushing waters. The elephants, made furious by their wounds, increased the disorder, and trampled down thousands of the Persian archers. The Great King, who, from an exalted throne, beheld the misfortunes of his arms, sounded, with reluctant indignation, the signal of the retreat, and suspended for some hours the prosecution of the attack. But the vigilant citizens improved the opportunity of the night, and the return of day discovered a new wall of six feet in height rising every moment to fill up the interval of the breach. Notwithstanding the disappointment of his hopes and the loss of more than twenty thousand men, Sapor still pressed the reduction of Nisibis with an obstinate firmness which could have yielded only to the necessity of defending the eastern provinces of Persia against a formidable invasion of the Massagetæ.⁶⁷ Alarmed by this intelligence, he hastily relinquished the siege, and marched with rapid diligence from the banks of the Tigris to those of the Oxus. The danger and difficulties of the Scythian war engaged him soon afterwards to conclude, or at least to observe, a truce with the Roman emperor, which was equally grateful to both princes, as Constantius himself, after the deaths of his two brothers, was involved, by the revolutions of the West, in a civil contest which required and seemed to exceed the most vigorous exertion of his undivided strength.

After the partition of the empire three years had scarcely elapsed

⁶⁷ We are obliged to Zonaras (tom. ii. l. xiii. [c. 7] p. 11 [15]) for this invasion of the Massagetæ, which is perfectly consistent with the general series of events, to which we are darkly led by the broken history of Ammianus.

^a Macdonald Kinnier observes on these floating batteries, "As the elevation of the place is considerably above the level of the country in its immediate vicinity, and the Mygdouius is a very insignificant stream,

it is difficult to imagine how this work could have been accomplished, even with the wonderful resources which the king must have had at his disposal." *Geographical Memoir*, p. 262.—M.

before the sons of Constantine seemed impatient to convince mankind that they were incapable of contenting themselves with the dominions which they were unqualified to govern. The eldest of those princes soon complained that he was defrauded of his just proportion of the spoils of their murdered kinsmen; and though he might yield to the superior guilt and merit of Constantius, he exacted from Constans the cession of the African provinces, as an equivalent for the rich countries of Macedonia and Greece which his brother had acquired by the death of Dalmatius. The want of sincerity which Constantine experienced in a tedious and fruitless negotiation exasperated the fierceness of his temper, and he eagerly listened to those favourites who suggested to him that his honour, as well as his interest, was concerned in the prosecution of the quarrel. At the head of a tumultuary band, suited for rapine rather than for conquest, he suddenly broke into the dominions of Constans, by the way of the Julian Alps, and the country round Aquileia felt the first effects of his resentment. The measures of Constans, who then resided in Dacia, were directed with more prudence and ability. On the news of his brother's invasion he detached a select and disciplined body of his Illyrian troops, proposing to follow them in person with the remainder of his forces. But the conduct of his lieutenants soon terminated the unnatural contest. By the artful appearances of flight, Constantine was betrayed into an ambuscade, which had been concealed in a wood, where the rash youth, with a few attendants, was surprised, surrounded, and slain. His body, after it had been found in the obscure stream of the Alsa, obtained the honours of an Imperial sepulchre, but his provinces transferred their allegiance to the conqueror, who, refusing to admit his elder brother Constantius to any share in these new acquisitions, maintained the undisputed possession of more than two-thirds of the Roman empire.⁶⁸

The fate of Constans himself was delayed about ten years longer, and the revenge of his brother's death was reserved for the more ignoble hand of a domestic traitor. The pernicious tendency of the system introduced by Constantine was displayed in the feeble administration of his sons, who, by their vices and weakness, soon lost the esteem and affections of their people. The pride assumed by Constans from the unmerited success of his arms was rendered more contemptible by his want of abilities and

⁶⁸ The causes and the events of this civil war are related with much perplexity and contradiction. I have chiefly followed Zonaras and the younger Victor. The mouody (ad calcem Eutrop. edit. Havercamp.) pronounced on the death of Constantine might have been very instructive; but prudence and false taste engaged the orator to involve himself in vague declamation.

Civil war,
and death of
Constantine,
A.D. 340,
March.

Murder of
Constans,
A.D. 350,
February.

application His fond partiality towards some German captives, distinguished only by the charms of youth, was an object of scandal to the people;⁶⁹ and Magnentius, an ambitious soldier, who was himself of barbarian extraction, was encouraged by the public discontent to assert the honour of the Roman name.⁷⁰ The chosen bands of Jovians and Herculians, who acknowledged Magnentius as their leader, maintained the most respectable and important station in the Imperial camp. The friendship of Marcellinus, count of the sacred largesses, supplied with a liberal hand the means of seduction. The soldiers were convinced, by the most specious arguments, that the republic summoned them to break the bonds of hereditary servitude, and, by the choice of an active and vigilant prince, to reward the same virtues which had raised the ancestors of the degenerate Constans from a private condition to the throne of the world. As soon as the conspiracy was ripe for execution, Marcellinus, under the pretence of celebrating his son's birthday, gave a splendid entertainment to the *illustrious* and *honourable* persons of the court of Gaul, which then resided in the city of Autun. The intemperance of the feast was artfully protracted till a very late hour of the night, and the unsuspecting guests were tempted to indulge themselves in a dangerous and guilty freedom of conversation. On a sudden the doors were thrown open, and Magnentius, who had retired for a few moments, returned into the apartment, invested with the diadem and purple. The conspirators instantly saluted him with the titles of Augustus and Emperor. The surprise, the terror, the intoxication, the ambitious hopes, and the mutual ignorance of the rest of the assembly, prompted them to join their voices to the general acclamation. The guards hastened to take the oath of fidelity, the gates of the town were shut, and before the dawn of day Magnentius became master of the troops and treasure of the palace and city of Autun. By his secrecy and diligence he entertained some hopes of surprising the person of Constans, who was pursuing in the adjacent forest his favourite amusement of hunting, or perhaps some pleasures of a more private and criminal nature. The rapid progress of fame allowed him, however, an instant for flight, though the desertion of his soldiers and subjects deprived him of the power of resistance. Before he

⁶⁹ Quorum (*gentium*) obsides pretio quæsitos pueros venustiores, quod cultius habuerat, libidino hujusmodi arsisse *pro certo* habetur. [De Cris. 41.] Had not the depraved taste of Constans been publicly avowed, the elder Victor, who held a considerable office in his brother's reign, would not have asserted it in such positive terms.

⁷⁰ Julian. Orat. i. and ii. Zosim. l. ii. [c. 42] p. 134. Victor in Epitome [c. 41]. There is reason to believe that Magnentius was born in one of those barbarian colonies which Constantius Chlorus had established in Gaul (see this History, vol. ii. p. 75). His behaviour may remind us of the patriot earl of Leicester, the famous Simon de Montfort, who could persuade the good people of England that he, a Frenchman by birth had taken arms to deliver them from foreign favourites.

could reach a seaport in Spain, where he intended to embark, he was overtaken near Helena,⁷¹ at the foot of the Pyrenees, by a party of light cavalry, whose chief, regardless of the sanctity of a temple, executed his commission by the murder of the son of Constantine.⁷²

As soon as the death of Constans had decided this easy but important revolution, the example of the court of Autun was imitated by the provinces of the West. The authority of Magnentius was acknowledged through the whole extent of the two great præfectures of Gaul and Italy; and the usurper prepared, by every act of oppression, to collect a treasure which might discharge the obligation of an immense donative and supply the expenses of a civil war. The martial countries of Illyricum, from the Danube to the extremity of Greece, had long obeyed the government of Vetranio, an aged general, beloved for the simplicity of his manners, and who had acquired some reputation by his experience and services in war.⁷³ Attached by habit, by duty, and by gratitude to the house of Constantine, he immediately gave the strongest assurances to the only surviving son of his late master that he would expose, with unshaken fidelity, his person and his troops to inflict a just revenge on the traitors of Gaul. But the legions of Vetranio were seduced, rather than provoked, by the example of rebellion; their leader soon betrayed a want of firmness or a want of sincerity, and his ambition derived a specious pretence from the approbation of the princess Constantina. That cruel and aspiring woman, who had obtained from the great Constantine, her father, the rank of *Augusta*, placed the diadem with her own hands on the head of the Illyrian general, and seemed to expect from his victory the accomplishment of those unbounded hopes of which she had been disappointed by the death of her husband Hannibalianus. Perhaps it was without the consent of Constantina that the new emperor formed a necessary, though dishonourable, alliance with the usurper of the West, whose purple was so recently stained with her brother's blood.⁷⁴

⁷¹ This ancient city had once flourished under the name of Illiberis (Pomponius Mela, ii. 5). The munificence of Constantine gave it new splendour, and his mother's name. Helena (it is still called Elne) became the seat of a bishop, who long afterwards transferred his residence to Perpignan, the capital of modern Rousillon. See d'Anville, *Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule*, p. 380; Longuerue, *Description de la France*, p. 223; and the *Marca Hispanica*, l. i. c. 2.

⁷² Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 42] p. 119, 120; Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. [c. 6] p. 13; and the Abbreviators.

⁷³ Eutropius (x. 10 [6]) describes Vetranio with more temper, and probably with more truth, than either of the two Victors. Vetranio was born of obscure parents in the wildest parts of Mæsia; and so much had his education been neglected, that, after his elevation, he studied the alphabet.

⁷⁴ The doubtful, fluctuating conduct of Vetranio is described by Julian in his first oration [p. 30, sqq.], and accurately explained by Spanheim, who discusses the situation and behaviour of Constantina.

The intelligence of these important events, which so deeply affected the honour and safety of the Imperial house, recalled the arms of Constantius from the inglorious prosecution of the Persian war. He recommended the care of the East to his lieutenants, and afterwards to his cousin Gallus, whom he raised from a prison to a throne, and marched towards Europe, with a mind agitated by the conflict of hope and fear, of grief and indignation. On his arrival at Heraclea in Thrace, the emperor gave audience to the ambassadors of Magnentius and Vetranio. The first author of the conspiracy, Marcellinus, who in some measure had bestowed the purple on his new master, boldly accepted this dangerous commission; and his three colleagues were selected from the illustrious personages of the state and army. These deputies were instructed to soothe the resentment, and to alarm the fears, of Constantius. They were empowered to offer him the friendship and alliance of the western princes, to cement their union by a double marriage,—of Constantius with the daughter of Magnentius, and of Magnentius himself with the ambitious Constantina,—and to acknowledge in the treaty the pre-eminence of rank which might justly be claimed by the emperor of the East. Should pride and mistaken piety urge him to refuse these equitable conditions, the ambassadors were ordered to expatiate on the inevitable ruin which must attend his rashness, if he ventured to provoke the sovereigns of the West to exert their superior strength, and to employ against him that valour, those abilities, and those legions, to which the house of Constantine had been indebted for so many triumphs. Such propositions and such arguments appeared to deserve the most serious attention; the answer of Constantius was deferred till the next day; and as he had reflected on the importance of justifying a civil war in the opinion of the people, he thus addressed his council, who listened with real or affected credulity: “Last night,” said he, “after I retired to rest, the shade of the great Constantine, embracing the corpse of my murdered brother, rose before my eyes; his well-known voice awakened me to revenge, forbade me to despair of the republic, and assured me of the success and immortal glory which would crown the justice of my arms.” The authority of such a vision, or rather of the prince who alleged it, silenced every doubt, and excluded all negotiation. The ignominious terms of peace were rejected with disdain. One of the ambassadors of the tyrant was dismissed with the haughty answer of Constantius: his colleagues, as unworthy of the privileges of the law of nations, were put in irons; and the contending powers prepared to wage an implacable war.⁷⁵

Constantius
refuses to
treat.
A.D. 350.

⁷⁵ See Peter the Patrician, in the *Excerpta Legationum*, p. 28 [ed. Paris.; cap. 14, v. 130, ed. Bonn].

Such was the conduct, and such perhaps was the duty, of the brother of Constantius towards the perfidious usurper of Gaul. The situation and character of Vetranio admitted of milder measures; and the policy of the Eastern emperor was directed to disunite his antagonists, and to separate the forces of Illyricum from the cause of rebellion. It was an easy task to deceive the frankness and simplicity of Vetranio, who, fluctuating some time between the opposite views of honour and interest, displayed to the world the insincerity of his temper, and was insensibly engaged in the snares of an artful negotiation. Constantius acknowledged him as a legitimate and equal colleague in the empire, on condition that he would renounce his disgraceful alliance with Magnentius, and appoint a place of interview on the frontiers of their respective provinces, where they might pledge their friendship by mutual vows of fidelity, and regulate by common consent the future operations of the civil war. In consequence of this agreement, Vetranio advanced to the city of Sardica,⁷⁶ at the head of twenty thousand horse, and of a more numerous body of infantry; a power so far superior to the forces of Constantius, that the Illyrian emperor appeared to command the life and fortunes of his rival, who, depending on the success of his private negotiations, had seduced the troops and undermined the throne of Vetranio. The chiefs, who had secretly embraced the party of Constantius, prepared in his favour a public spectacle, calculated to discover and inflame the passions of the multitude.⁷⁷ The united armies were commanded to assemble in a large plain near the city. In the centre, according to the rules of ancient discipline, a military tribunal, or rather scaffold, was erected, from whence the emperors were accustomed, on solemn and important occasions, to harangue the troops. The well-ordered ranks of Romans and barbarians, with drawn swords, or with erected spears, the squadrons of cavalry, and the cohorts of infantry, distinguished by the variety of their arms and ensigns, formed an immense circle round the tribunal; and the attentive silence which they preserved was sometimes interrupted by loud bursts of clamour or of applause. In the presence of this formidable assembly the two emperors were called upon to explain the situation of public affairs: the precedence of rank was yielded to the royal birth of Constantius; and though he was indifferently skilled in the arts of rhetoric, he acquitted himself, under these difficult circumstances, with firmness, dexterity, and eloquence. The first part of

⁷⁶ Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. [c. 7] p. 15. The position of Sardica, near the modern city of Sophia, appears better suited to this interview than the situation of either Naissus or Sirmium, where it is placed by Jerom, Socrates, and Sozomen.

⁷⁷ See the two first orations of Julian, particularly p. 31; and Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 44] p. 122. The distinct narrative of the historian serves to illustrate the diffuse but vague descriptions of the orator.

his oration seemed to be pointed only against the tyrant of Gaul; but while he tragically lamented the cruel murder of Constans, he insinuated that none, except a brother, could claim a right to the succession of his brother. He displayed, with some complacency, the glories of his Imperial race; and recalled to the memory of the troops the valour, the triumphs, the liberality of the great Constantine, to whose sons they had engaged their allegiance by an oath of fidelity, which the ingratitude of his most favoured servants had tempted them to violate. The officers, who surrounded the tribunal, and were instructed to act their parts in this extraordinary scene, confessed the irresistible power of reason and eloquence, by saluting the emperor Constantius as their lawful sovereign. The contagion of loyalty and repentance was communicated from rank to rank, till the plain of Sardica resounded with the universal acclamation of "Away with these upstart usurpers! Long life and victory to the son of Constantine! Under his banners alone we will fight and conquer." The shout of thousands, their menacing gestures, the fierce clashing of their arms, astonished and subdued the courage of Vetranio, who stood, amidst the defection of his followers, in anxious and silent suspense. Instead of embracing the last refuge of generous despair, he tamely submitted to his fate, and, taking the diadem from his head, in the view of both armies fell prostrate at the feet of his conqueror. Constantius used his victory with prudence and moderation; and raising from the ground the aged suppliant, whom he affected to style by the endearing name of Father, he gave him his hand to descend from the throne. The city of Prusa was assigned for the exile or retirement of the abdicated monarch, who lived six years in the enjoyment of ease and affluence. He often expressed his grateful sense of the goodness of Constantius, and, with a very amiable simplicity, advised his benefactor to resign the sceptre of the world, and to seek for content (where alone it could be found) in the peaceful obscurity of a private condition.⁷⁸

The behaviour of Constantius on this memorable occasion was celebrated with some appearance of justice; and his courtiers compared the studied orations which a Pericles or a Demosthenes addressed to the populace of Athens with the victorious eloquence which had persuaded an armed multitude to desert and depose the object of their partial choice.⁷⁹ The approaching

Makes war
against
Magnentius,
A.D. 351.

⁷⁸ The younger Victor assigns to his exile the emphatical appellation of "*voluptarium otium*." [Epit. c. 41.] Socrates (l. ii. c. 28) is the voucher for the correspondence with the emperor, which would seem to prove that Vetranio was, indeed, *prope ad stultitiam simplicissimus*.

⁷⁹ *Eum Constantius facundia vi dejectum Imperii in privatum otium removit. Quæ gloria post natum Imperium soli processit eloquio elementiaque, &c. Aurelius Victor* [de Cesar. c. 42]. Julian and Themistius (Orat. iii. and iv.) adorn this exploit with all the artificial and gaudy colouring of their rhetoric.

contest with Magnentius was of a more serious and bloody kind. The tyrant advanced by rapid marches to encounter Constantius, at the head of a numerous army, composed of Gauls and Spaniards, of Franks and Saxons; of those provincials who supplied the strength of the legions, and of those barbarians who were dreaded as the most formidable enemies of the republic. The fertile plains⁸⁰ of the Lower Pannonia, between the Drave, the Save, and the Danube, presented a spacious theatre; and the operations of the civil war were protracted during the summer months by the skill or timidity of the combatants.⁸¹ Constantius had declared his intention of deciding the quarrel in the fields of Cibalis, a name that would animate his troops by the remembrance of the victory which, on the same auspicious ground, had been obtained by the arms of his father Constantine. Yet, by the impregnable fortifications with which the emperor encompassed his camp, he appeared to decline rather than to invite a general engagement. It was the object of Magnentius to tempt or to compel his adversary to relinquish this advantageous position; and he employed with that view the various marches, evolutions, and stratagems which the knowledge of the art of war could suggest to an experienced officer. He carried by assault the important town of Siscia; made an attack on the city of Sirmium, which lay in the rear of the Imperial camp; attempted to force a passage over the Save into the eastern provinces of Illyricum; and cut in pieces a numerous detachment which he had allured into the narrow passes of Adarne. During the greater part of the summer the tyrant of Gaul showed himself master of the field. The troops of Constantius were harassed and dispirited; his reputation declined in the eye of the world; and his pride condescended to solicit a treaty of peace, which would have resigned to the assassin of Constans the sovereignty of the provinces beyond the Alps. These offers were enforced by the eloquence of Philip the Imperial ambassador; and the council as well as the army of Magnentius were disposed to accept them. But the haughty usurper, careless of the remonstrances of his friends, gave orders that Philip should be detained as a captive, or at least as a hostage; while he despatched an officer to reproach Constantius with the weakness of his reign, and to insult him by the promise of a pardon if he would instantly abdicate the purple. "That he should confide in
"the justice of his cause, and the protection of an avenging Deity,"

⁸⁰ Busbequius (p. 112) traversed the Lower Hungary and Slavonia at a time when they were reduced almost to a desert, by the reciprocal hostilities of the Turks and Christians. Yet he mentions with admiration the unconquerable fertility of the soil; and observes that the height of the grass was sufficient to conceal a loaded waggon from his sight. See likewise Browne's Travels, in Harris's Collection, vol. ii. p. 762, &c.

⁸¹ Zosimus gives a very large account of the war and the negotiation (l. ii. [c. 45-54] p. 123-130). But as he neither shows himself a soldier nor a politician, his narrative must be weighed with attention, and received with caution.

was the only answer which honour permitted the emperor to return. But he was so sensible of the difficulties of his situation, that he no longer dared to retaliate the indignity which had been offered to his representative. The negotiation of Philip was not, however, ineffectual, since he determined Sylvanus the Frank, a general of merit and reputation, to desert with a considerable body of cavalry a few days before the battle of Mursa.

The city of Mursa, or Essek, celebrated in modern times for a bridge of boats, five miles in length, over the river Drave, and the adjacent morasses,⁸² has been always considered as a place of importance in the wars of Hungary. Magnentius, directing his march towards Mursa, set fire to the gates, and, by a sudden assault, had almost scaled the walls of the town. The vigilance of the garrison extinguished the flames; the approach of Constantius left him no time to continue the operations of the siege; and the emperor soon removed the only obstacle that could embarrass his motions, by forcing a body of troops which had taken post in an adjoining amphitheatre. The field of battle round Mursa was a naked and level plain: on this ground the army of Constantius formed, with the Drave on their right; while their left, either from the nature of their disposition, or from the superiority of their cavalry, extended far beyond the right flank of Magnentius.⁸³ The troops on both sides remained under arms in anxious expectation during the greatest part of the morning; and the son of Constantine, after animating his soldiers by an eloquent speech, retired into a church at some distance from the field of battle, and committed to his generals the conduct of this decisive day.⁸⁴ They deserved his confidence by the valour and military skill which they exerted. They wisely began the action upon the left; and advancing their whole wing of cavalry in an oblique line, they suddenly wheeled it on the right flank of the enemy, which was unprepared to resist the impetuosity of their charge. But the Romans of the West soon rallied by the habits of discipline; and the barbarians of Germany supported the renown of their national bravery. The engagement soon became

Battle of
Mursa,
A.D. 351.
Sept. 28.

⁸² This remarkable bridge, which is flanked with towers and supported on large wooden piles, was constructed, A.D. 1566, by Sultan Soliman, to facilitate the march of his armies into Hungary. See Browne's Travels, and Busching's System of Geography, vol. ii. p. 90.

⁸³ This position, and the subsequent evolutions, are clearly, though concisely, described by Julian, *Orat. i.* p. 36.

⁸⁴ Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. p. 405 [ed. Lugd. Bat. 1647]. The emperor passed the day in prayer with Valens, the Arian bishop of Mursa, who gained his confidence by announcing the success of the battle. M. de Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 1110) very properly remarks the silence of Julian with regard to the personal prowess of Constantius in the battle of Mursa. The silence of flattery is sometimes equal to the most positive and authentic evidence.

general; was maintained with various and singular turns of fortune; and scarcely ended with the darkness of the night. The signal victory which Constantius obtained is attributed to the arms of his cavalry. His cuirassiers are described as so many massy statues of steel, glittering with their scaly armour, and breaking with their ponderous lances the firm array of the Gallic legions. As soon as the legions gave way, the lighter and more active squadrons of the second line rode sword in hand into the intervals and completed the disorder. In the mean while, the huge bodies of the Germans were exposed almost naked to the dexterity of the Oriental archers; and whole troops of those barbarians were urged by anguish and despair to precipitate themselves into the broad and rapid stream of the Drave.⁸⁵ The number of the slain was computed at fifty-four thousand men, and the slaughter of the conquerors was more considerable than that of the vanquished;⁸⁶ a circumstance which proves the obstinacy of the contest, and justifies the observation of an ancient writer, that the forces of the empire were consumed in the fatal battle of Mursa, by the loss of a veteran army, sufficient to defend the frontiers, or to add new triumphs to the glory of Rome.⁸⁷ Notwithstanding the invectives of a servile orator, there is not the least reason to believe that the tyrant deserted his own standard in the beginning of the engagement. He seems to have displayed the virtues of a general and of a soldier till the day was irrecoverably lost, and his camp in the possession of the enemy. Magnentius then consulted his safety, and, throwing away the Imperial ornaments, escaped with some difficulty from the pursuit of the light horse, who incessantly followed his rapid flight from the banks of the Drave to the foot of the Julian Alps.⁸⁸

The approach of winter supplied the indolence of Constantius with

⁸⁵ Julian. Orat. i. p. 36, 37; and Orat. ii. p. 59, 60. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. [c. 8] p. 17. Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 49-52] p. 130-133. The last of these celebrates the dexterity of the archer Menelaus, who could discharge three arrows at the same time; an advantage which, according to his apprehension of military affairs, materially contributed to the victory of Constantius.

⁸⁶ According to Zonaras [l. c.], Constantius, out of 80,000 men, lost 30,000; and Magnentius lost 24,000 out of 36,000. The other articles of this account seem probable and authentic, but the numbers of the tyrant's army must have been mistaken, either by the author or his transcribers. Magnentius had collected the whole force of the West, Romans and barbarians, into one formidable body, which cannot fairly be estimated at less than 100,000 men. Julian. Orat. i. p. 34, 35.

⁸⁷ *Ingentes R. l. vires ea dimicatione consumptæ sunt, ad quælibet bella externa idoneæ, quæ multum triumphorum possent securitatisque conferre.* Eutropius, x. 13 [6]. The younger Victor expresses himself to the same effect.

⁸⁸ On this occasion we must prefer the unsuspected testimony of Zosimus and Zonaras to the flattering assertions of Julian. The younger Victor paints the character of Magnentius in a singular light: "*Sermonis acer, animi tumidi, et immodice timidus; artifex tamen ad occultandam audaciæ specie formidinem.*" [Epit. c. 43.] Is it most likely that in the battle of Mursa his behaviour was governed by nature or by art? I should incline for the latter.

specious reasons for deferring the prosecution of the war till the ensuing spring. Magnentius had fixed his residence in the city of Aquileia, and showed a seeming resolution to dispute the passage of the mountains and morasses which fortified the confines of the Venetian province. The surprisal of a castle in the Alps by the secret march of the Imperialists could scarcely have determined him to relinquish the possession of Italy, if the inclinations of the people had supported the cause of their tyrant.⁸⁹ But the memory of the cruelties exercised by his ministers, after the unsuccessful revolt of Nepotian, had left a deep impression of horror and resentment on the minds of the Romans. That rash youth, the son of the princess Eutropia, and the nephew of Constantine, had seen with indignation the sceptre of the West usurped by a perfidious barbarian. Arming a desperate troop of slaves and gladiators, he overpowered the feeble guard of the domestic tranquillity of Rome, received the homage of the senate, and, assuming the title of Augustus, precariously reigned during a tumult of twenty-eight days. The march of some regular forces put an end to his ambitious hopes: the rebellion was extinguished in the blood of Nepotian, of his mother Eutropia, and of his adherents; and the proscription was extended to all who had contracted a fatal alliance with the name and family of Constantine.⁹⁰ But as soon as Constantius, after the battle of Mursa, became master of the sea-coast of Dalmatia, a band of noble exiles, who had ventured to equip a fleet in some harbour of the Adriatic, sought protection and revenge in his victorious camp. By their secret intelligence with their countrymen, Rome and the Italian cities were persuaded to display the banners of Constantius on their walls. The grateful veterans, enriched by the liberality of the father, signalised their gratitude and loyalty to the son. The cavalry, the legions, and the auxiliaries of Italy, renewed their oath of allegiance to Constantius; and the usurper, alarmed by the general desertion, was compelled, with the remains of his faithful troops, to retire beyond the Alps into the provinces of Gaul. The detachments, however, which were ordered either to press or to intercept the flight of Magnentius, conducted themselves with the usual imprudence of success; and allowed him, in the plains of Pavia, an opportunity

⁸⁹ Julian. Orat. i. p. 38, 39. In that place, however, as well as in Oration ii. p. 97, he insinuates the general disposition of the senate, the people, and the soldiers of Italy, towards the party of the emperor.

⁹⁰ The elder Victor describes in a pathetic manner the miserable condition of Rome: "*Cujus stolidum ingenium adeo P. R. patribusque exitio fuit, uti passim domus, fora, viae, templaque, cruore, cadaveribusque opplerentur, bustorum modo.*" [De Cæsar. c. 42.] Athanasius (tom. i. p. 677) deplors the fate of several illustrious victims, and Julian (Orat. ii. p. 58) execrates the cruelty of Marcellinus, the implacable enemy of the house of Constantine.

of turning on his pursuers, and of gratifying his despair by the carnage of a useless victory.⁹¹

The pride of Magnentius was reduced, by repeated misfortunes, to sue, and to sue in vain, for peace. He first despatched a senator, in whose abilities he confided, and afterwards several bishops, whose holy character might obtain a more favourable audience, with the offer of resigning the purple, and the promise of devoting the remainder of his life to the service of the emperor. But Constantius, though he granted fair terms of pardon and reconciliation to all who abandoned the standard of rebellion,⁹² avowed his inflexible resolution to inflict a just punishment on the crimes of an assassin whom he prepared to overwhelm on every side by the effort of his victorious arms. An Imperial fleet acquired the easy possession of Africa and Spain, confirmed the wavering faith of the Moorish nations, and landed a considerable force, which passed the Pyrenees, and advanced towards Lyons, the last and fatal station of Magnentius.⁹³ The temper of the tyrant, which was never inclined to clemency, was urged by distress to exercise every act of oppression which could extort an immediate supply from the cities of Gaul.⁹⁴ Their patience was at length exhausted; and Treves, the seat of Prætorian government, gave the signal of revolt, by shutting her gates against Decentius, who had been raised by his brother to the rank either of Cæsar or of Augustus.⁹⁵ From Treves, Decentius was obliged to retire to Sens, where he was soon surrounded by an army of Germans, whom the pernicious arts of Constantius had introduced into the civil dissensions of Rome.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Zosim. l. ii. [c. 53] p. 133. Victor in Epitome [c. 42]. The panegyrist of Constantius, with their usual candour, forget to mention this accidental defeat.

⁹² Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. [c. 8] p. 17. Julian, in several places of the two orations, expatiates on the clemency of Constantius to the rebels.

⁹³ Zosim. l. ii. [c. 53] p. 133. Julian. Orat. i. p. 40, ii. p. 74.

⁹⁴ Ammian. xv. 6. Zosim. l. ii. [c. 53] p. 133. Julian, who (Orat. i. p. 40) inveighs against the cruel effects of the tyrant's despair, mentions (Orat. i. p. 34) the oppressive edicts which were dictated by his necessities, or by his avarice. His subjects were compelled to purchase the Imperial demesnes; a doubtful and dangerous species of property, which, in case of a revolution, might be imputed to them as a treasonable usurpation.

⁹⁵ The medals of Magnentius celebrate the victories of the *two* Augusti, and of the Cæsar. The Cæsar was another brother named Desiderius. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 757.

⁹⁶ Julian. Orat. i. p. 40, ii. p. 74; with Spanheim, p. 263. His Commentary illustrates the transactions of this civil war. Mons Seleuci was a small place in the Cottian Alps, a few miles distant from Vapincum, or Gap, an episcopal city of Dauphiné. See d'Anville, Notice de la Gaule, p. 464; and Longuerue, Description de la France, p. 327.^a

* The Itinerary of Antoninus (p. 357, ed. Wess.) places Mons Seleucus twenty-four miles from Vapincum (Gap), and twenty-six from Lucus (le Luc) on the road to Die (Dea Vocontiorum). The

situation answers to Mont Saléon, a little place on the right of the small river Buech, which falls into the Durance. Roman antiquities have been found in this place St. Martin. Note to Le Beau, ii. 47. —M

In the mean time the Imperial troops forced the passages of the Cottian Alps, and in the bloody combat of Mount Seleucus irrevocably fixed the title of rebels on the party of Magnentius.⁹⁷ He was unable to bring another army into the field; the fidelity of his guards was corrupted; and when he appeared in public to animate them by his exhortations, he was saluted with an unanimous shout of "Long live the emperor Constantius!" The tyrant, who perceived that they were preparing to deserve pardon and rewards by the sacrifice of the most obnoxious criminal, prevented their design by falling on his sword;⁹⁸ a death more easy and more honourable than he could hope to obtain from the hands of an enemy whose revenge would have been coloured with the specious pretence of justice and fraternal piety. The example of suicide was imitated by Decentius, who strangled himself on the news of his brother's death. The author of the conspiracy, Marcellinus, had long since disappeared in the battle of Mursa,⁹⁹ and the public tranquillity was confirmed by the execution of the surviving leaders of a guilty and unsuccessful faction. A severe inquisition was extended over all who, either from choice or from compulsion, had been involved in the cause of rebellion. Paul, surnamed Catena from his superior skill in the judicial exercise of tyranny,^a was sent to explore the latent remains of the conspiracy in the remote province of Britain. The honest indignation expressed by Martin, vice-præfect of the island, was interpreted as an evidence of his own guilt; and the governor was urged to the necessity of turning against his breast the sword with which he had been provoked to wound the Imperial minister. The most innocent subjects of the West were exposed to exile and confiscation, to death and torture; and as the timid are always cruel, the mind of Constantius was inaccessible to mercy.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 53] p. 134. Liban. Orat. x. p. 268, 269. The latter most vehemently arraigns this cruel and selfish policy of Constantius.

⁹⁸ Julian. Orat. i. p. 40. Zosimus, l. ii. [c. 53] p. 134. Socrates, l. ii. c. 32. Sozomen, l. iv. c. 7. The younger Victor describes his death with some horrid circumstances: *Transfosso latere, ut erat vasti corporis, vulnere naribusque et ore cruorem effundens, expiravit.* [Epit. c. 42.] If we can give credit to Zonaras, the tyrant, before he expired, had the pleasure of murdering with his own hands his mother and his brother Desiderius.

⁹⁹ Julian (Orat. ii. p. 58, 59) seems at a loss to determine whether he inflicted on himself the punishment of his crimes, whether he was drowned in the Drave, or whether he was carried by the avenging dæmons from the field of battle to his destined place of eternal tortures.

¹⁰⁰ Ammian. xiv. 5, xxi. 16.

^a This is scarcely correct, *ut erat in ei Catenæ inditum est cognomentum.*
^c *applicandis negotiis artifex dirus, unde Amm. Marc. loc. cit.—M.*

CHAPTER XIX.

CONSTANTIUS SOLE EMPEROR.—ELEVATION AND DEATH OF GALLUS.—DANGER AND ELEVATION OF JULIAN.—SARMATIAN AND PERSIAN WARS.—VICTORIES OF JULIAN IN GAUL.

THE divided provinces of the empire were again united by the victory of Constantius; but as that feeble prince was destitute of personal merit either in peace or war; as he feared his generals, and distrusted his ministers; the triumph of his arms served only to establish the reign of the *eunuchs* over the Roman world. Those unhappy beings, the ancient production of Oriental jealousy and despotism,¹ were introduced into Greece and Rome by the contagion of Asiatic luxury.² Their progress was rapid; and the eunuchs, who, in the time of Augustus, had been abhorred, as the monstrous retinue of an Egyptian queen,³ were gradually admitted into the families of matrons, of senators, and of the emperors themselves.⁴ Restrained by the severe edicts of Domitian and Nerva,⁵ cherished by the pride of Diocletian, reduced to an humble station by the prudence of Constantine,⁶ they multiplied in the palaces of

¹ Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 6) imputes the first practice of castration to the cruel ingenuity of Semiramis, who is supposed to have reigned above nineteen hundred years before Christ. The use of eunuchs is of high antiquity, both in Asia and Egypt. They are mentioned in the law of Moses, Deuteron. xxiii. 1. See Goguet, *Origines des Loix*, &c., Part i. l. i. c. 3.

² Eunuchum dixi velle te;
Quia solæ utuntur his reginæ—

Terent. *Eunuch*. act i. scene 2.

This play is translated from Menander, and the original must have appeared soon after the eastern conquests of Alexander.

³ Miles . . spadonibus
Servire rugosis potest.

Horat. *Carm.* v. 9 [Epod. ix. 13], and Dacier ad loc.

By the word *spado* the Romans very forcibly expressed their abhorrence of this mutilated condition. The Greek appellation of eunuchs, which insensibly prevailed, had a milder sound and a more ambiguous sense.

⁴ We need only mention Posides, a freedman and eunuch of Claudius, in whose favour the emperor prostituted some of the most honourable rewards of military valour. See Sueton. in Claudio, c. 28. Posides employed a great part of his wealth in building.

Ut *spado* vincebat Capitolia nostra Posides.

Juvenal. *Sat.* xiv. [91.]

⁵ *Castrari mares vetuit.* Sueton. in Domitian. c. 7. See Dion Cassius, l. lxxvii. [c. 2] p. 1101; l. lxxviii. [c. 2] p. 1119.

⁶ There is a passage in the *Augustan History*, p. 137, in which Lampridius, whilst he praises Alexander Severus and Constantine for restraining the tyranny of the eunuchs, deploras the mischiefs which they occasioned in other reigns. *Huc accedit, quod eunuchos nec in consiliis nec in ministeriis habuit; qui soli principes perdunt, dum*

his degenerate sons, and insensibly acquired the knowledge, and at length the direction, of the secret councils of Constantius. The aversion and contempt which mankind has so uniformly entertained for that imperfect species appears to have degraded their character, and to have rendered them almost as incapable as they were supposed to be of conceiving any generous sentiment, or of performing any worthy action.⁷ But the eunuchs were skilled in the arts of flattery and intrigue; and they alternately governed the mind of Constantius by his fears, his indolence, and his vanity.⁸ Whilst he viewed in a deceitful mirror the fair appearance of public prosperity, he supinely permitted them to intercept the complaints of the injured provinces; to accumulate immense treasures by the sale of justice and of honours; to disgrace the most important dignities by the promotion of those who had purchased at their hands the powers of oppression;⁹ and to gratify their resentment against the few independent spirits who arrogantly refused to solicit the protection of slaves. Of these slaves the most distinguished was the chamberlain Eusebius, who ruled the monarch and the palace with such absolute sway, that Constantius, according to the sarcasm of an impartial historian, possessed some credit with this haughty favourite.¹⁰ By his artful suggestions, the emperor was persuaded to subscribe the condemnation of the unfortunate Gallus, and to add a new crime to the long list of unnatural murders which pollute the honour of the house of Constantine.

When the two nephews of Constantine, Gallus and Julian, were saved from the fury of the soldiers, the former was about twelve, and the latter about six, years of age; and, as the

*Education of
Gallus and
Julian.*

eos more gentium aut regum Persarum volunt vivere; qui a populo etiam amicissimum semovent; qui internuntii sunt, aliud quàm respondetur, [sæpe] referentes; claudentes principem suum, et agentes ante omnia ne quid sciat. [Lampr. Alex. Sev. c. 66.]

⁷ Xenophon (*Cyropædia*, l. vii. [5. § 60] p. 540) has stated the specious reasons which engaged Cyrus to intrust his person to the guard of eunuchs. He had observed in animals, that, although the practice of castration might tame their ungovernable fierceness, it did not diminish their strength or spirit; and he persuaded himself that those who were separated from the rest of human kind would be more firmly attached to the person of their benefactor. But a long experience has contradicted the judgment of Cyrus. Some particular instances may occur of eunuchs distinguished by their fidelity, their valour, and their abilities; but if we examine the general history of Persia, India, and China, we shall find that the power of the eunuchs has uniformly marked the decline and fall of every dynasty.

⁸ See Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxi. c. 16; l. xxii. c. 4. The whole tenor of his impartial history serves to justify the invectives of Mamertinus, of Libanius, and of Julian himself, who have insulted the vices of the court of Constantius.

⁹ Aurelius Victor censures the negligence of his sovereign in choosing the governors of the provinces and the generals of the army, and concludes his history with a very bold observation, as it is much more dangerous under a feeble reign to attack the ministers than the master himself. "*Uti verum absolvam brevi, ut Imperatore ipso clarius, ita apparitorum plerisque magis atrox nihil.*" [*De Cæsar. c. 42.*]

¹⁰ Apud quem (si vere dici debeat) multum Constantius potuit. Ammian. l. xviii. c. 4.

eldest was thought to be of a sickly constitution, they obtained with the less difficulty a precarious and dependent life from the affected pity of Constantius, who was sensible that the execution of these helpless orphans would have been esteemed, by all mankind, an act of the most deliberate cruelty.^{11a} Different cities of Ionia and Bithynia were assigned for the places of their exile and education; but as soon as their growing years excited the jealousy of the emperor, he judged it more prudent to secure those unhappy youths in the strong castle of Macellum, near Cæsarea. The treatment which they experienced during a six years' confinement was partly such as they could hope from a careful guardian, and partly such as they might dread from a suspicious tyrant.¹² Their prison was an ancient palace, the residence of the kings of Cappadocia; the situation was pleasant, the building stately, the enclosure spacious. They pursued their studies, and practised their exercises, under the tuition of the most skilful masters; and the numerous household appointed to attend, or rather to guard, the nephews of Constantine, was not unworthy of the dignity of their birth. But they could not disguise to themselves that they were deprived of fortune, of freedom, and of safety; secluded from the society of all whom they could trust or esteem, and condemned to pass their melancholy hours in the company of slaves devoted to the commands of a tyrant who had already injured them beyond the hope of reconciliation. At length, however, the emergencies of the state compelled the emperor, or rather his eunuchs, to invest Gallus, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, with the title of Cæsar, and to cement this political connection by his marriage with the princess Constantina. After a formal interview, in which the two princes mutually engaged their faith never to undertake anything to the prejudice of each other, they repaired without delay to their respective stations. Constantius continued his march towards the West, and Gallus fixed his residence at Antioch; from whence, with a delegated authority, he administered the five great dioceses of the eastern præfecture.¹³ In this

Gallus
declared
Cæsar,
A.D. 351,
March 5.

¹¹ Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat.* iii. p. 90) reproaches the apostate with his ingratitude towards Mark, bishop of Arethusa, who had contributed to save his life; and we learn, though from a less respectable authority (Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 916), that Julian was concealed in the sanctuary of a church.

¹² The most authentic account of the education and adventures of Julian is contained in the epistle or manifesto which he himself addressed to the senate and people of Athens. Libanius (*Orat. Parentalis*), on the side of the Pagans, and Socrates (*l.* iii. c. 1), on that of the Christians, have preserved several interesting circumstances.

¹³ For the promotion of Gallus see Idatius, Zosimus, and the two Victors. Accord-

* Gallus and Julian were not sons of the same mother. Their father, Julius Constantius, had had Gallus by his first wife, named Galla: Julian was the son of Basilina, whom he had espoused in a second marriage. Tillemont, *Hist. des Emp. Vie de Constantin*, art. 3.—G. See genealogical table, vol. ii. p. 349.—S.

fortunate change, the new Cæsar was not unmindful of his brother Julian, who obtained the honours of his rank, the appearances of liberty, and the restitution of an ample patrimony.¹⁴

The writers the most indulgent to the memory of Gallus, and even Julian himself, though he wished to cast a veil over the frailties of his brother, are obliged to confess that the Cæsar was incapable of reigning. Transported from a prison to a throne, he possessed neither genius nor application, nor docility to compensate for the want of knowledge and experience. A temper naturally morose and violent, instead of being corrected; was soured by solitude and adversity; the remembrance of what he had endured disposed him to retaliation rather than to sympathy; and the ungoverned sallies of his rage were often fatal to those who approached his person, or were subject to his power.¹⁵ Constantina, his wife, is described, not as a woman, but as one of the infernal furies tormented with an insatiate thirst of human blood.¹⁶ Instead of employing her influence to insinuate the mild counsels of prudence and humanity, she exasperated the fierce passions of her husband; and as she retained the vanity, though she had renounced the gentleness of her sex, a pearl necklace was esteemed an equivalent price for the murder of an innocent and virtuous nobleman.¹⁷ The cruelty of Gallus was sometimes displayed in the undissembled violence of popular or military executions: and was sometimes disguised by the abuse of law and the forms of judicial proceedings. The private houses of Antioch, and the places of public resort, were besieged by spies and informers; and the Cæsar himself, concealed in a plebeian habit, very frequently condescended to assume that odious character. Every apartment of the palace was adorned with the instruments of death and torture, and a general consternation was diffused through

Cruelty and
imprudence
of Gallus.

ing to Philostorgius (l. iv. c. 1), Theophilus, an Arian bishop, was the witness, and, as it were, the guarantee of this solemn engagement. He supported that character with generous firmness; but M. de Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 1120) thinks it very improbable that an heretic should have possessed such virtue.

¹⁴ Julian was at first permitted to pursue his studies at Constantinople, but the reputation which he acquired soon excited the jealousy of Constantius; and the young prince was advised to withdraw himself to the less conspicuous scenes of Bithynia and Ionia.

¹⁵ See Julian ad S. P. Q. A. p. 271. Jerom. in Chron. Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, x. 14 [7]. I shall copy the words of Eutropius, who wrote his abridgment about fifteen years after the death of Gallus, when there was no longer any motive either to flatter or to depreciate his character. "Multis incivilibus gestis Gallus Cæsar . . . vir naturâ ferus et ad tyrannidem pronior, si suo jure imperare licuisset."

¹⁶ *Megara quædam mortalis, inflammatrix sævientis assidua, humani cruoris avida*, &c. Ammian. Marcellin. l. xiv. c. 1. The sincerity of Ammianus would not suffer him to misrepresent facts or characters, but his love of *ambitious* ornaments frequently betrayed him into an unnatural vehemence of expression.

¹⁷ His name was Clematius of Alexandria, and his only crime was a refusal to gratify the desires of his mother-in-law; who solicited his death, because she had been disappointed of his love. Ammian. l. xiv. c. 1.

the capital of Syria. The prince of the East, as if he had been conscious how much he had to fear, and how little he deserved to reign, selected for the objects of his resentment the provincials accused of some imaginary treason, and his own courtiers, whom with more reason he suspected of incensing, by their secret correspondence, the timid and suspicious mind of Constantius. But he forgot that he was depriving himself of his only support, the affection of the people; whilst he furnished the malice of his enemies with the arms of truth, and afforded the emperor the fairest pretence of exacting the forfeit of his purple and of his life.¹⁸

As long as the civil war suspended the fate of the Roman world
 Constantius dissembled his knowledge of the weak and
 cruel administration to which his choice had subjected the
 East; and the discovery of some assassins, secretly de-
 spatched to Antioch by the tyrant of Gaul, was employed to convince
 the public that the emperor and the Cæsar were united by the same
 interest, and pursued by the same enemies.¹⁹ But when the victory
 was decided in favour of Constantius, his dependent colleague became
 less useful and less formidable. Every circumstance of his conduct
 was severely and suspiciously examined, and it was privately resolved
 either to deprive Gallus of the purple, or at least to remove him from
 the indolent luxury of Asia to the hardships and dangers of a Ger-
 man war. The death of Theophilus, consular of the province of
 Syria, who in a time of scarcity had been massacred by the people of
 Antioch, with the connivance and almost at the instigation of Gallus,
 was justly resented, not only as an act of wanton cruelty, but as
 a dangerous insult on the supreme majesty of Constantius. Two
 ministers of illustrious rank, Domitian the Oriental præfect, and
 Montius, quæstor of the palace, were empowered by a special com-
 mission^a to visit and reform the state of the East. They were in-
 structed to behave towards Gallus with moderation and respect, and,
 by the gentlest arts of persuasion, to engage him to comply with the
 invitation of his brother and colleague. The rashness of the præfect
 disappointed these prudent measures, and hastened his own ruin as
 well as that of his enemy. On his arrival at Antioch, Domitian

¹⁸ See in Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 1, 7) a very ample detail of the cruelties of Gallus. His brother Julian (p. 272) insinuates that a secret conspiracy had been formed against him; and Zosimus names (l. ii. [c. 55] p. 135) the persons engaged in it; a minister of considerable rank, and two obscure agents, who were resolved to make their fortune.

¹⁹ Zonaras, l. xiii. [c. 8] tom. ii. p. 17, 18. The assassins had seduced a great number of legionaries; but their designs were discovered and revealed by an old woman in whose cottage they lodged.

^a The commission seems to have been terfered to support his authority. Amm granted to Domitian alone. Montius in. Marc. loc. cit.—M.

passed disdainfully before the gates of the palace; and, alleging a slight pretence of indisposition, continued several days in sullen retirement, to prepare an inflammatory memorial, which he transmitted to the Imperial court. Yielding at length to the pressing solicitations of Gallus, the præfect condescended to take his seat in council; but his first step was to signify a concise and haughty mandate, importing that the Cæsar should immediately repair to Italy, and threatening that he himself would punish his delay or hesitation by suspending the usual allowance of his household. The nephew and daughter of Constantine, who could ill brook the insolence of a subject, expressed their resentment by instantly delivering Domitian to the custody of a guard. The quarrel still admitted of some terms of accommodation. They were rendered impracticable by the imprudent behaviour of Montius, a statesman whose art and experience were frequently betrayed by the levity of his disposition.²⁰ The quæstor reproached Gallus, in haughty language, that a prince who was scarcely authorized to remove a municipal magistrate should presume to imprison a Prætorian præfect; convoked a meeting of the civil and military officers, and required them, in the name of their sovereign, to defend the person and dignity of his representatives. By this rash declaration of war the impatient temper of Gallus was provoked to embrace the most desperate counsels. He ordered his guards to stand to their arms, assembled the populace of Antioch, and recommended to their zeal the care of his safety and revenge. His commands were too fatally obeyed. They rudely seized the præfect and the quæstor, and, tying their legs together with ropes, they dragged them through the streets of the city, inflicted a thousand insults and a thousand wounds on these unhappy victims, and at last precipitated their mangled and lifeless bodies into the stream of the Orontes.²¹

After such a deed, whatever might have been the designs of Gallus, it was only in a field of battle that he could assert his innocence with any hope of success. But the mind of that prince was formed of an equal mixture of violence and weakness. Instead of assuming the title of Augustus, instead of employing in his defence the troops and treasures of the East, he suffered himself to be deceived by the affected tranquillity of Constantius, who,

Dangerous
situation of
Gallus.

²⁰ In the present text of Ammianus [xiv. 7] we read *Asper*, quidem, sed ad *lenitatem* propensior; which forms a sentence of contradictory nonsense. With the aid of an old manuscript, Valesius has rectified the first of these corruptions, and we perceive a ray of light in the substitution of the word *vafes*. If we venture to change *lenitatem* into *lenitatem*, this alteration of a single letter will render the whole passage clear and consistent.

²¹ Instead of being obliged to collect scattered and imperfect hints from various sources, we now enter into the full stream of the history of Ammianus, and need only refer to the seventh and ninth chapters of his fourteenth book. Philostorgius, however (l. iii. c. 28), though partial to Gallus, should not be entirely overlooked.

leaving him the vain pageantry of a court, imperceptibly recalled the veteran legions from the provinces of Asia. But as it still appeared dangerous to arrest Gallus in his capital, the slow and safer arts of dissimulation were practised with success. The frequent and pressing epistles of Constantius were filled with professions of confidence and friendship, exhorting the Cæsar to discharge the duties of his high station, to relieve his colleague from a part of the public cares, and to assist the West by his presence, his counsels, and his arms. After so many reciprocal injuries, Gallus had reason to fear and to distrust. But he had neglected the opportunities of flight and of resistance; he was seduced by the flattering assurances of the tribune Scudilo, who, under the semblance of a rough soldier, disguised the most artful insinuation; and he depended on the credit of his wife Constantina till the unseasonable death of that princess completed the ruin in which he had been involved by her impetuous passions.²²

After a long delay the reluctant Cæsar set forwards on his journey to the Imperial court. From Antioch to Hadrianople he traversed the wide extent of his dominions with a numerous and stately train; and, as he laboured to conceal his apprehensions from the world, and perhaps from himself, he entertained the people of Constantinople with an exhibition of the games of the circus. The progress of the journey might, however, have warned him of the impending danger. In all the principal cities he was met by ministers of confidence, commissioned to seize the offices of government, to observe his motions, and to prevent the hasty sallies of his despair. The persons despatched to secure the provinces which he left behind passed him with cold salutations or affected disdain; and the troops whose station lay along the public road were studiously removed on his approach, lest they might be tempted to offer their swords for the service of a civil war.²³ After Gallus had been permitted to repose himself a few days at Hadrianople he received a mandate, expressed in the most haughty and absolute style, that his splendid retinue should halt in that city, while the Cæsar himself, with only ten post-carriages, should hasten to the Imperial residence at Milan. In this rapid journey the profound respect which was due to the brother and colleague of Constantius was insensibly changed into rude familiarity; and Gallus, who discovered in the countenances

His disgrace
and death,
A.D. 354,
December.

²² She had preceded her husband, but died of a fever on the road, at a little place in Bithynia called Cœnum Gallicanum.

²³ The Thebæan legions, which were then quartered at Hadrianople, sent a deputation to Gallus, with a tender of their services. Ammian. l. xiv. c. 11. The Notitia (s. 6, 20, 38, edit. Labb.) mentions three several legions which bore the name of Thebæan. The zeal of M. de Voltaire to destroy a despicable though celebrated legend has tempted him on the slightest grounds to deny the existence of a Thebæan legion in the Roman armies. See Œuvres de Voltaire, tom. xv. p. 414, quarto edition.

of the attendants that they already considered themselves as his guards, and might soon be employed as his executioners, began to accuse his fatal rashness, and to recollect with terror and remorse the conduct by which he had provoked his fate. The dissimulation which had hitherto been preserved was laid aside at Petovio^a in Pannonia. He was conducted to a palace in the suburbs, where the general Barbatio, with a select band of soldiers, who could neither be moved by pity nor corrupted by rewards, expected the arrival of his illustrious victim. In the close of the evening he was arrested, ignominiously stripped of the ensigns of Cæsar, and hurried away to Pola,^b in Istria, a sequestered prison, which had been so recently polluted with royal blood. The horror which he felt was soon increased by the appearance of his implacable enemy the eunuch Eusebius, who, with the assistance of a notary and a tribune, proceeded to interrogate him concerning the administration of the East. The Cæsar sunk under the weight of shame and guilt, confessed all the criminal actions and all the treasonable designs with which he was charged; and, by imputing them to the advice of his wife, exasperated the indignation of Constantius, who reviewed with partial prejudice the minutes of the examination. The emperor was easily convinced that his own safety was incompatible with the life of his cousin: the sentence of death was signed, despatched, and executed; and the nephew of Constantine, with his hands tied behind his back, was beheaded in prison, like the vilest malefactor.²⁴ Those who are inclined to palliate the cruelties of Constantius assert that he soon relented, and endeavoured to recall the bloody mandate; but that the second messenger, intrusted with the reprieve, was detained by the eunuchs, who dreaded the unforgiving temper of Gallus, and were desirous of reuniting to *their* empire the wealthy provinces of the East.²⁵

Besides the reigning emperor, Julian alone survived of all the numerous posterity of Constantius Chlorus. The misfortune of his royal birth involved him in the disgrace of Gallus. From his retirement in the happy country of Ionia he was conveyed, under a strong guard, to the court of Milan, where he languished

The danger
and escape
of Julian.

²⁴ See the complete narrative of the journey and death of Gallus in Ammianus, l. xiv. c. 11. Julian complains that his brother was put to death without a trial; attempts to justify, or at least to excuse, the cruel revenge which he had inflicted on his enemies; but seems at last to acknowledge that he might justly have been deprived of the purple.

²⁵ Philostorgius, l. iv. c. 1. Zonaras, l. xiii. [c. 9] tom. ii. p. 19. But the former was partial towards an Arian monarch, and the latter transcribed, without choice or criticism, whatever he found in the writings of the ancients.

^a Pettau in Styria.—M.

^b Pather to Flanonia, now Fianone, near Pola. St. Martin.—M.

above seven months in the continual apprehension of suffering the same ignominious death which was daily inflicted, almost before his eyes, on the friends and adherents of his persecuted family. His looks, his gestures, his silence, were scrutinized with malignant curiosity, and he was perpetually assaulted by enemies whom he had never offended, and by arts to which he was a stranger.²⁶ But in the school of adversity Julian insensibly acquired the virtues of firmness and discretion. He defended his honour, as well as his life, against the ensnaring subtleties of the eunuchs, who endeavoured to extort some declaration of his sentiments; and whilst he cautiously suppressed his grief and resentment, he nobly disdained to flatter the tyrant by any seeming approbation of his brother's murder. Julian most devoutly ascribes his miraculous deliverance to the protection of the gods, who had exempted his innocence from the sentence of destruction pronounced by their justice against the impious house of Constantine.²⁷ As the most effectual instrument of their providence, he gratefully acknowledges the steady and generous friendship of the empress Eusebia,²⁸ a woman of beauty and merit, who, by the ascendant which she had gained over the mind of her husband, counterbalanced in some measure the powerful conspiracy of the eunuchs. By the intercession of his patroness Julian was admitted into the Imperial presence: he pleaded his cause with a decent freedom; he was heard with favour; and, notwithstanding the efforts of his enemies, who urged the danger of sparing an avenger of the blood of Gallus, the milder sentiment of Eusebia prevailed in the council. But the effects of a second interview were dreaded by the eunuchs; and Julian was advised to withdraw for a while into the neighbourhood of Milan, till the emperor thought proper to assign the city of Athens for the place of his honourable exile. As he had discovered from his earliest youth a propensity, or rather passion, for the language, the manners, the learning, and the religion of the Greeks, he obeyed with pleasure an order so agreeable to his wishes. Far from the tumult of arms and the treachery of courts, he spent six months amidst the groves of the

He is sent
to Athens,
A.D. 355.
May

²⁶ See Ammianus Marcellin. l. xv. c. 1, 3, 8. Julian himself, in his epistle to the Athenians, draws a very lively and just picture of his own danger and of his sentiments. He shows, however, a tendency to exaggerate his sufferings, by insinuating, though in obscure terms, that they lasted above a year; a period which cannot be reconciled with the truth of chronology.

²⁷ Julian has worked the crimes and misfortunes of the family of Constantine into an allegorical fable, which is happily conceived and agreeably related. It forms the conclusion of the seventh Oration, from whence it has been detached and translated by the Abbé de la Bléterie, *Vie de Jovien*, tom. ii. p. 385-408.

²⁸ She was a native of Thessalonica in Macedonia, of a noble family, and the daughter as well as sister of consuls. Her marriage with the emperor may be placed in the year 352. In a divided age the historians of all parties agree in her praises. See their testimonies collected by Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 750-754.

Academy, in a free intercourse with the philosophers of the age, who studied to cultivate the genius, to encourage the vanity, and to inflame the devotion of their royal pupil. Their labours were not unsuccessful; and Julian inviolably preserved for Athens that tender regard which seldom fails to arise in a liberal mind from the recollection of the place where it has discovered and exercised its growing powers. The gentleness and affability of manners which his temper suggested and his situation imposed, insensibly engaged the affections of the strangers, as well as citizens, with whom he conversed. Some of his fellow-students might perhaps examine his behaviour with an eye of prejudice and aversion; but Julian established in the schools of Athens a general prepossession in favour of his virtues and talents, which was soon diffused over the Roman world.²⁹

Whilst his hours were passed in studious retirement, the empress, resolute to achieve the generous design which she had undertaken, was not unmindful of the care of his fortune. Recalled to Milan; The death of the late Cæsar had left Constantius invested with the sole command, and oppressed by the accumulated weight, of a mighty empire. Before the wounds of civil discord could be healed, the provinces of Gaul were overwhelmed by a deluge of barbarians. The Sarmatians no longer respected the barrier of the Danube. The impunity of rapine had increased the boldness and numbers of the wild Isaurians; those robbers descended from their craggy mountains to ravage the adjacent country, and had even presumed, though without success, to besiege the important city of Seleucia, which was defended by a garrison of three Roman legions. Above all, the Persian monarch, elated by victory, again threatened the peace of Asia; and the presence of the emperor was indispensably required both in the West and in the East. For the first time Constantius sincerely acknowledged that his single strength was unequal to such an extent of care and of dominion.³⁰ Insensible to the voice of flattery, which assured him that his all-powerful virtue and celestial fortune would still continue to triumph over every obstacle, he listened with complacency to the advice of Eusebia, which gratified his indolence, without offending his suspicious pride. As she perceived that the remembrance of Gallus dwelt on the emperor's mind, she artfully

²⁹ Libanius and Gregory Nazianzen have exhausted the arts as well as the powers of their eloquence to represent Julian as the first of heroes, or the worst of tyrants. Gregory was his fellow-student at Athens; and the symptoms, which he so tragically describes, of the future wickedness of the apostate, amount only to some bodily imperfections, and to some peculiarities in his speech and manner. He protests, however, that he *then* foresaw and foretold the calamities of the church and state (Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. iv. p. 121, 122).

³⁰ Succumbere tot necessitatibus tamque crebris unum se, quod nunquam fecerat, aperte demonstrans. Ammian. l. xv. c. 8. He then expresses, in their own words, the flattering assurances of the courtiers.

turned his attention to the opposite characters of the two brothers, which from their infancy had been compared to those of Domitian and of Titus.³¹ She accustomed her husband to consider Julian as a youth of a mild, unambitious disposition, whose allegiance and gratitude might be secured by the gift of the purple, and who was qualified to fill with honour a subordinate station, without aspiring to dispute the commands or to shade the glories of his sovereign and benefactor. After an obstinate though secret struggle, the opposition of the favourite eunuchs submitted to the ascendancy of the empress; and it was resolved that Julian, after celebrating his nuptials with Helena, sister of Constantius, should be appointed, with the title of Cæsar, to reign over the countries beyond the Alps.³²

Although the order which recalled him to court was probably accompanied by some intimation of his approaching greatness, he appeals to the people of Athens to witness his tears of undissembled sorrow, when he was reluctantly torn away from his beloved retirement.³³ He trembled for his life, for his fame, and even for his virtue; and his sole confidence was derived from the persuasion that Minerva inspired all his actions, and that he was protected by an invisible guard of angels, whom for that purpose she had borrowed from the Sun and Moon. He approached with horror the palace of Milan; nor could the ingenuous youth conceal his indignation when he found himself accosted with false and servile respect by the assassins of his family. Eusebia, rejoicing in the success of her benevolent schemes, embraced him with the tenderness of a sister, and endeavoured, by the most soothing caresses, to dispel his terrors and reconcile him to his fortune. But the ceremony of shaving his beard, and his awkward demeanour when he first exchanged the cloak of a Greek philosopher for the military habit of a Roman prince, amused during a few days the levity of the Imperial court.³⁴

The emperors of the age of Constantine no longer deigned to consult with the senate in the choice of a colleague; but they were anxious that their nomination should be ratified by the consent of the army. On this solemn occasion the guards, with the other troops whose stations were in the neighbourhood of Milan, appeared under

³¹ *Tantum a temperatis moribus Juliani differens fratris quantum inter Vespasiani filios fuit, Domitianum et Titum.* Ammian. l. xiv. c. 11. The circumstances and education of the two brothers were so nearly the same as to afford a strong example of the innate difference of characters.

³² Ammianus, l. xv. c. 8. Zosimus, l. iii. [c. 2] p. 137, 138.

³³ Julian. ad S. P. Q. A. p. 275, 276. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 268. Julian did not yield till the gods had signified their will by repeated visions and omens. His piety then forbade him to resist.

³⁴ Julian himself relates (p. 274), with some humour, the circumstances of his own metamorphosis, his downcast looks, and his perplexity at being thus suddenly transported into a new world, where every object appeared strange and hostile.

arms; and Constantius ascended his lofty tribunal, holding by the hand his cousin Julian, who entered the same day into the twenty-fifth year of his age.³⁵ In a studied speech, conceived and delivered with dignity, the emperor represented the various dangers which threatened the prosperity of the republic, the necessity of naming a Cæsar for the administration of the West, and his own intention, if it was agreeable to their wishes, of rewarding with the honours of the purple the promising virtues of the nephew of Constantine. The approbation of the soldiers was testified by a respectful murmur: they gazed on the manly countenance of Julian, and observed with pleasure that the fire which sparkled in his eyes was tempered by a modest blush on being thus exposed for the first time to the public view of mankind. As soon as the ceremony of his investiture had been performed, Constantius addressed him with the tone of authority which his superior age and station permitted him to assume; and, exhorting the new Cæsar to deserve, by heroic deeds, that sacred and immortal name, the emperor gave his colleague the strongest assurances of a friendship which should never be impaired by time, nor interrupted by their separation into the most distant climates. As soon as the speech was ended, the troops, as a token of applause, clashed their shields against their knees;³⁶ while the officers who surrounded the tribunal expressed, with decent reserve, their sense of the merits of the representative of Constantius.

and declared
Cæsar,
A.D. 355,
Nov. 6.

The two princes returned to the palace in the same chariot; and, during the slow procession, Julian repeated to himself a verse of his favourite Homer, which he might equally apply to his fortune and to his fears.³⁷ The four-and-twenty days which the Cæsar spent at Milan after his investiture, and the first months of his Gallic reign, were devoted to a splendid but severe captivity; nor could the acquisition of honour compensate for the loss of freedom.³⁸ His steps were watched, his correspondence was intercepted; and he was

³⁵ See Ammian. Marcellin. l. xv. c. 8. Zosimus, l. iii. [c. 2] p. 139. Aurelius Victor. Victor Junior in Epitom. [c. 42.] Eutrop. x. 14 [7].

³⁶ Militares omnes horrendo fragore scuta genibus illidentes; quod est prosperitatis indicium plenum; nam contra cum hastis clypei feriuntur, iræ documentum est et doloris. . . . Ammianus adds, with a nice distinction, Eumque ut potiori reverentia servaretur, nec supra modum laudabant nec infra quam decebat [xv. 8].

³⁷ Ἑλλὰς πορφύρεος θάνατος, καὶ μοῖρα κραταῖη. The word *purple*, which Homer had used as a vague but common epithet for death, was applied by Julian to express, very aptly, the nature and object of his own apprehensions.

³⁸ He represents, in the most pathetic terms (p. 277), the distress of his new situation. The provision for his table was however so elegant and sumptuous, that the young philosopher rejected it with disdain. Quum legeret libellum assidue, quem Constantius ut privignum ad studia mittens manū suā conscripserat, prælicenter disponens quid in convivio Cæsaris impendi deberet, Phasianum, et vulvam et sumen exigi vetuit et inferri. Ammian. Marcellin. l. xvi. c. 5.

obliged, by prudence, to decline the visits of his most intimate friends. Of his former domestics four only were permitted to attend him—two pages, his physician, and his librarian; the last of whom was employed in the care of a valuable collection of books, the gift of the empress, who studied the inclinations as well as the interest of her friend. In the room of these faithful servants an household was formed, such, indeed, as became the dignity of a Cæsar; but it was filled with a crowd of slaves, destitute, and perhaps incapable, of any attachment for their new master, to whom, for the most part, they were either unknown or suspected. His want of experience might require the assistance of a wise council; but the minute instructions which regulated the service of his table, and the distribution of his hours, were adapted to a youth still under the discipline of his preceptors rather than to the situation of a prince intrusted with the conduct of an important war. If he aspired to deserve the esteem of his subjects, he was checked by the fear of displeasing his sovereign; and even the fruits of his marriage-bed were blasted by the jealous artifices of Eusebia,³⁹ herself, who, on this occasion alone, seems to have been unmindful of the tenderness of her sex and the generosity of her character. The memory of his father and of his brothers reminded Julian of his own danger, and his apprehensions were increased by the recent and unworthy fate of Sylvanus. In the summer which preceded his own elevation that general had been chosen to deliver Gaul from the tyranny of the barbarians; but Sylvanus soon discovered that he had left his most dangerous enemies in the Imperial court. A dexterous informer, countenanced by several of the principal ministers, procured from him some recommendatory letters; and, erasing the whole of the contents, except the signature, filled up the vacant parchment with matters of high and treasonable import. By the industry and courage of his friends the fraud was, however, detected, and in a great council of the civil and military officers, held in the presence of the emperor himself, the innocence of Sylvanus was publicly acknowledged. But the discovery came too late; the report of the calumny, and the hasty seizure of his estate, had already provoked the indignant chief to the rebellion of which he was so unjustly accused.

Fatal end
of Sylvanus,
A.D. 335,
September.

³⁹ If we recollect that Constantine, the father of Helena, died above eighteen years before in a mature old age, it will appear probable that the daughter, though a virgin, could not be very young at the time of her marriage. She was soon afterwards delivered of a son, who died immediately, *quod obstetrix corrupta mercede, mox natum præsecto plusquam convenerat umbilico necavit*. She accompanied the emperor and empress in their journey to Rome, and the latter, *quæsitum venenum bibere per fraudem illexit, ut quotiescunque concepisset, immaturum abjiceret partum*. Ammian. l. xvi. c. 10. Our physicians will determine whether there exists such a poison. For my own part, I am inclined to hope that the public malignity imputed the effects of accident as the guilt of Eusebia.

He assumed the purple at his head-quarters of Cologne, and his active powers appeared to menace Italy with an invasion and Milan with a siege. In this emergency Ursicinus, a general of equal rank, regained, by an act of treachery, the favour which he had lost by his eminent services in the East. Exasperated, as he might speciously allege, by injuries of a similar nature, he hastened with a few followers to join the standard, and to betray the confidence, of his too credulous friend. After a reign of only twenty-eight days Sylvanus was assassinated: the soldiers who, without any criminal intention, had blindly followed the example of their leader, immediately returned to their allegiance; and the flatterers of Constantius celebrated the wisdom and felicity of the monarch who had extinguished a civil war without the hazard of a battle.⁴⁰

The protection of the Rhetian frontier, and the persecution of the Catholic church, detained Constantius in Italy above eighteen months after the departure of Julian. Before the emperor returned into the East he indulged his pride and curiosity in a visit to the ancient capital.⁴¹ He proceeded from Milan to Rome along the Æmilian and Flaminian ways; and as soon as he approached within forty miles of the city, the march of a prince who had never vanquished a foreign enemy assumed the appearance of a triumphal procession. His splendid train was composed of all the ministers of luxury; but in a time of profound peace he was encompassed by the glittering arms of the numerous squadrons of his guards and cuirassiers. Their streaming banners of silk, embossed with gold, and shaped in the form of dragons, waved round the person of the emperor. Constantius sat alone in a lofty car resplendent with gold and precious gems; and, except when he bowed his head to pass under the gates of the cities, he affected a stately demeanour of inflexible, and, as it might seem, of insensible gravity. The severe discipline of the Persian youth had been introduced by the eunuchs into the Imperial palace; and such were the habits of patience which they had inculcated, that, during a slow and sultry march, he was never seen to move his hand towards his face, or to turn his eyes either to the right or to the left. He was received by the magistrates and senate of Rome; and the emperor surveyed, with attention, the civil honours of the republic and the consular images of the noble families. The streets were lined with an innu-

Constantius
visits Rome,
A.D. 357.
April 28.

⁴⁰ Ammianus (xv. 5) was perfectly well informed of the conduct and fate of Sylvanus. He himself was one of the few followers who attended Ursicinus in his dangerous enterprise.

⁴¹ For the particulars of the visit of Constantius to Rome, see Ammianus, l. xvi. c. 10. We have only to add that Themistius was appointed deputy from Constanti-
nople, and that he composed his fourth oration for this ceremony.

merable multitude. Their repeated acclamations expressed their joy at beholding, after an absence of thirty-two years, the sacred person of their sovereign; and Constantius himself expressed, with some pleasantry, his affected surprise that the human race should thus suddenly be collected on the same spot. The son of Constantine was lodged in the ancient palace of Augustus: he presided in the senate, harangued the people from the tribunal which Cicero had so often ascended, assisted with unusual courtesy at the games of the circus, and accepted the crowns of gold, as well as the panegyrics, which had been prepared for this ceremony by the deputies of the principal cities. His short visit of thirty days was employed in viewing the monuments of art and power which were scattered over the seven hills and the interjacent valleys. He admired the awful majesty of the Capitol, the vast extent of the baths of Caracalla and Diocletian, the severe simplicity of the Pantheon, the massy greatness of the amphitheatre of Titus, the elegant architecture of the theatre of Pompey and the Temple of Peace, and, above all, the stately structure of the Forum and column of Trajan; acknowledging that the voice of fame, so prone to invent and to magnify, had made an inadequate report of the metropolis of the world. The traveller who has contemplated the ruins of ancient Rome may conceive some imperfect idea of the sentiments which they must have inspired when they reared their heads in the splendour of unsullied beauty.

The satisfaction which Constantius had received from this journey excited him to the generous emulation of bestowing on the Romans some memorial of his own gratitude and munificence. His first idea was to imitate the equestrian and colossal statue which he had seen in the Forum of Trajan; but, when he had maturely weighed the difficulties of the execution,⁴² he chose rather to embellish the capital by the gift of an Egyptian obelisk. In a remote but polished age, which seems to have preceded the invention of alphabetical writing, a great number of these obelisks had been erected, in the cities of Thebes and Heliopolis, by the ancient sovereigns of Egypt, in a just confidence that the simplicity of their form, and the hardness of their substance, would resist the injuries of time and violence.⁴³ Several of these extraordinary

A new
obelisk.

⁴² Hormisdas, a fugitive prince of Persia, observed to the emperor, that, if he made such a horse, he must think of preparing a similar stable (the Forum of Trajan). Another saying of Hormisdas is recorded, "that one thing only had *displeased* him, to find that men died at Rome as well as elsewhere." If we adopt this reading of the text of Ammianus (*displacuisse* instead of *placuisse*), we may consider it as a reproof of Roman vanity. The contrary sense would be that of a misanthrope.

⁴³ When Germanicus visited the ancient monuments of Thebes, the eldest of the priests explained to him the meaning of these hieroglyphics. Tacit. Annal. ii. c. 60. But it seems probable that before the useful invention of an alphabet these natural

columns had been transported to Rome by Augustus and his successors as the most durable monuments of their power and victory;⁴⁴ but there remained one obelisk which, from its size or sanctity, escaped for a long time the rapacious vanity of the conquerors. It was designed by Constantine to adorn his new city;⁴⁵ and, after being removed by his order from the pedestal where it stood before the Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, was floated down the Nile to Alexandria. The death of Constantine suspended the execution of his purpose, and this obelisk was destined by his son to the ancient capital of the empire. A vessel of uncommon strength and capaciousness was provided to convey this enormous weight of granite, at least an hundred and fifteen feet in length, from the banks of the Nile to those of the Tiber. The obelisk of Constantius was landed about three miles from the city, and elevated, by the efforts of art and labour, in the great circus of Rome.⁴⁶

The departure of Constantius from Rome was hastened by the alarming intelligence of the distress and danger of the Illyrian provinces. The distractions of civil war, and the irreparable loss which the Roman legions had sustained in the battle of Mursa, exposed those countries, almost without defence, to the light cavalry of the barbarians; and particularly to the inroads of the Quadi, a fierce and powerful nation, who seem to have exchanged the institutions of Germany for the arms and military arts of their Sarmatian allies.⁴⁷ The garrisons of the frontier were insufficient to check their progress; and the indolent monarch was at length compelled to assemble, from the extremities of his dominions, the flower of the Palatine troops, to take the field in person, and to employ a whole campaign, with the preceding autumn and the

The Quadian and Sarmatian war, A.D. 357, 358, 359.

or arbitrary signs were the common characters of the Egyptian nation. See Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. iii. p. 69-243.

⁴⁴ See Plin. *Hist. Natur.* l. xxxvi. c. 14, 15.

⁴⁵ Ammian. Marcellin. l. xvii. c. 4. He gives us a Greek interpretation of the hieroglyphics, and his commentator Lindenbrogius adds a Latin inscription, which, in twenty verses of the age of Constantius, contain a short history of the obelisk.

⁴⁶ See Donat. *Roma Antiqua*, l. iii. c. 14, l. iv. c. 12; and the learned, though confused, Dissertation of Bærgæus on Obelisks, inserted in the fourth volume of Grævius's *Roman Antiquities*, p. 1897-1936. This dissertation is dedicated to Pope Sixtus V., who erected the obelisk of Constantius in the square before the patriarchal church of St. John Lateran.^a

⁴⁷ The events of this Quadian and Sarmatian war are related by Ammianus, xvi. 10, xvii. 12, 13, xix. 11.

^a It is doubtful whether the obelisk transported by Constantius to Rome now exists. Even from the text of Ammianus it is uncertain whether the interpretation of Hermapion refers to the older obelisk (*obelisco incisus est veteri quem videmus in Circo*), raised, as he himself states,

in the Circus Maximus, long before, by Augustus, or to the one brought by Constantius. The obelisk in the square before the church of St. John Lateran is ascribed, not to Rameses the Great, but to Thoutmos II. Champollion, 1. *Lettre à M. de Blacas*, p. 32. — M.

ensuing spring, in the serious prosecution of the war. The emperor passed the Danube on a bridge of boats, cut in pieces all that encountered his march, penetrated into the heart of the country of the Quadi, and severely retaliated the calamities which they had inflicted on the Roman province. The dismayed barbarians were soon reduced to sue for peace: they offered the restitution of his captive subjects as an atonement for the past, and the noblest hostages as a pledge of their future conduct. The generous courtesy which was shown to the first among their chieftains who implored the clemency of Constantius encouraged the more timid, or the more obstinate, to imitate their example; and the Imperial camp was crowded with the princes and ambassadors of the most distant tribes, who occupied the plains of the Lesser Poland, and who might have deemed themselves secure behind the lofty ridge of the Carpathian mountains. While Constantius gave laws to the barbarians beyond the Danube, he distinguished, with specious compassion, the Sarmatian exiles, who had been expelled from their native country by the rebellion of their slaves, and who formed a very considerable accession to the power of the Quadi. The emperor, embracing a generous but artful system of policy, released the Sarmatians from the bands of this humiliating dependence, and restored them, by a separate treaty, to the dignity of a nation united under the government of a king, the friend and ally of the republic. He declared his resolution of asserting the justice of their cause, and of securing the peace of the provinces by the extirpation, or at least the banishment, of the Limigantes, whose manners were still infected with the vices of their servile origin. The execution of this design was attended with more difficulty than glory. The territory of the Limigantes was protected against the Romans by the Danube, against the hostile barbarians by the Theiss. The marshy lands which lay between those rivers, and were often covered by their inundations, formed an intricate wilderness, pervious only to the inhabitants, who were acquainted with its secret paths and inaccessible fortresses. On the approach of Constantius the Limigantes tried the efficacy of prayers, of fraud, and of arms; but he sternly rejected their supplications, defeated their rude stratagems, and repelled with skill and firmness the efforts of their irregular valour. One of their most warlike tribes, established in a small island towards the conflux of the Theiss and the Danube, consented to pass the river with the intention of surprising the emperor during the security of an amicable conference. They soon became the victims of the perfidy which they meditated. Encompassed on every side, trampled down by the cavalry, slaughtered by the swords of the legions, they disdained to ask for mercy and,

with an undaunted countenance, still grasped their weapons in the agonies of death. After this victory a considerable body of Romans was landed on the opposite banks of the Danube; the Taifalæ, a Gothic tribe engaged in the service of the empire, invaded the Limigantes on the side of the Theiss; and their former masters, the free Sarmatians, animated by hope and revenge, penetrated through the hilly country into the heart of their ancient possessions. A general conflagration revealed the huts of the barbarians, which were seated in the depth of the wilderness; and the soldier fought with confidence on marshy ground, which it was dangerous for him to tread. In this extremity the bravest of the Limigantes were resolved to die in arms rather than to yield: but the milder sentiment, enforced by the authority of their elders, at length prevailed; and the suppliant crowd, followed by their wives and children, repaired to the Imperial camp to learn their fate from the mouth of the conqueror. After celebrating his own clemency, which was still inclined to pardon their repeated crimes, and to spare the remnant of a guilty nation, Constantius assigned for the place of their exile a remote country, where they might enjoy a safe and honourable repose. The Limigantes obeyed with reluctance; but before they could reach, at least before they could occupy, their destined habitations, they returned to the banks of the Danube, exaggerating the hardships of their situation, and requesting, with fervent professions of fidelity, that the emperor would grant them an undisturbed settlement within the limits of the Roman provinces. Instead of consulting his own experience of their incurable perfidy, Constantius listened to his flatterers, who were ready to represent the honour and advantage of accepting a colony of soldiers, at a time when it was much easier to obtain the pecuniary contributions than the military service of the subjects of the empire. The Limigantes were permitted to pass the Danube; and the emperor gave audience to the multitude in a large plain near the modern city of Buda. They surrounded the tribunal, and seemed to hear with respect an oration full of mildness and dignity; when one of the barbarians, casting his shoe into the air, exclaimed with a loud voice, *Marha! Marha!*^a a word of defiance, which was received as the signal of the tumult. They rushed with fury to seize the person of the emperor; his royal throne and golden couch were pillaged by these rude hands; but the faithful defence of his guards, who died at his feet, allowed him a moment to mount a fleet horse, and to escape from the confusion. The disgrace which had been incurred by a treacherous surprise was soon retrieved by

^a Reinesius reads Warrha, Warrha, Guerre, War. Wagner, note on Ann. Marc xix. 11.—M.

the numbers and discipline of the Romans; and the combat was only terminated by the extinction of the name and nation of the Limigantes. The free Sarmatians were reinstated in the possession of their ancient seats; and although Constantius distrusted the levity of their character, he entertained some hopes that a sense of gratitude might influence their future conduct. He had remarked the lofty stature and obsequious demeanour of Zizais, one of the noblest of their chiefs. He conferred on him the title of King; and Zizais proved that he was not unworthy to reign, by a sincere and lasting attachment to the interest of his benefactor, who, after this splendid success, received the name of *Sarmaticus* from the acclamations of his victorious army.⁴⁸

While the Roman emperor and the Persian monarch, at the distance of three thousand miles, defended their extreme limits against the barbarians of the Danube and of the Oxus, their intermediate frontier experienced the vicissitudes of a languid war and a precarious truce. Two of the eastern ministers of Constantius, the Prætorian præfect Musonian, whose abilities were disgraced by the want of truth and integrity, and Cassian duke of Mesopotamia, a hardy and veteran soldier, opened a secret negotiation with the satrap Tamsapor.^{49 a} These overtures of peace, translated into the servile and flattering language of Asia, were transmitted to the camp of the Great King, who resolved to signify, by an ambassador, the terms which he was inclined to grant to the suppliant Romans. Narses, whom he invested with that character, was honourably received in his passage through Antioch and Constantinople: he reached Sirmium after a long journey, and, at his first audience, respectfully unfolded the silken veil which covered the haughty epistle of his sovereign. Sapor, King of Kings, and Brother of the Sun and Moon (such were the lofty titles affected by oriental vanity), expressed his satisfaction that his brother, Constantius Cæsar, had been taught wisdom by adversity. As the lawful successor of Darius Hystaspes, Sapor asserted that the river Strymon, in Macedonia, was the true and ancient boundary of his empire; declaring, however, that, as an evidence of his moderation, he would content himself with the provinces of Armenia and Mesopotamia, which had been fraudulently extorted from his ancestors. He alleged that, without the restitution of these disputed countries, it was im-

⁴⁸ Genti Sarmatarum, magno decore considens apud eos, regem dedit. Aurelius Victor [Cæsar. 42]. In a pompous oration pronounced by Constantius himself he expatiates on his own exploits with much vanity and some truth.

⁴⁹ Ammian. xvi. 9.

^a In Persian, Tenschahpour. St. Martin, ii. 177.—M.

possible to establish any treaty on a solid and permanent basis; ~~and~~ he arrogantly threatened, that, if his ambassador returned in vain, he was prepared to take the field in the spring, and to support the justice of his cause by the strength of his invincible arms. Narses, who was endowed with the most polite and amiable manners, endeavoured, as far as was consistent with his duty, to soften the harshness of the message.⁵⁰ Both the style and substance were maturely weighed in the Imperial council, and he was dismissed with the following answer: "Constantius had a right to disclaim the officiousness of his ministers, who had acted without any specific orders from the throne: he was not, however, averse to an equal and honourable treaty; but it was highly indecent, as well as absurd, to propose to the sole and victorious emperor of the Roman world the same conditions of peace which he had indignantly rejected at the time when his power was contracted within the narrow limits of the East: the chance of arms was uncertain; and Sapor should recollect, that, if the Romans had sometimes been vanquished in battle, they had almost always been successful in the event of the war." A few days after the departure of Narses, three ambassadors were sent to the court of Sapor, who was already returned from the Scythian expedition to his ordinary residence of Ctesiphon. A count, a notary, and a sophist, had been selected for this important commission; and Constantius, who was secretly anxious for the conclusion of the peace, entertained some hopes that the dignity of the first of these ministers, the dexterity of the second, and the rhetoric of the third,⁵¹ would persuade the Persian monarch to abate of the rigour of his demands. But the progress of their negotiation was opposed and defeated by the hostile arts of Antoninus,⁵² a Roman subject of Syria, who had fled from oppression, and was admitted into the councils of Sapor, and even to the royal table, where, according to the custom of the Persians, the most important business was frequently discussed.⁵³ The dexterous fugitive pro-

⁵⁰ Ammianus (xvii. 5) transcribes the haughty letter. Themistius (Orat. iv. p. 57, edit. Petav.) takes notice of the silk covering. Idutius and Zonaras mention the journey of the ambassador; and Peter the Patrician (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 28 [ed. Paris; c. 15, p. 131, ed. Bonn]) has informed us of his conciliating behaviour.

⁵¹ Ammianus, xvii. 5, and Valesius ad loc. The sophist, or philosopher (in that age these words were almost synonymous), was Eustathius the Cappadocian, the disciple of Jaublichus, and the friend of St. Basil. Eunapius (in Vit. Ædesii, p. 44-47) fondly attributes to this philosophic ambassador the glory of enchanting the barbarian king by the persuasive charms of reason and eloquence. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 828, 1132.

⁵² Ammian. xviii. 5, 6, 8. The decent and respectful behaviour of Antoninus towards the Roman general sets him in a very interesting light; and Ammianus himself speaks of the traitor with some compassion and esteem.

⁵³ This circumstance, as it is noticed by Ammianus, serves to prove the veracity of Herodotus (l. i. c. 133), and the permanency of the Persian manners. In every age the Persians have been addicted to intemperance, and the wines of Shiraz have

moted his interest by the same conduct which gratified his revenge. He incessantly urged the ambition of his new master to embrace the favourable opportunity when the bravest of the Palatine troops were employed with the emperor in a distant war on the Danube. He pressed Sapor to invade the exhausted and defenceless provinces of the East, with the numerous armies of Persia, now fortified by the alliance and accession of the fiercest barbarians. The ambassadors of Rome retired without success, and a second embassy, of a still more honourable rank, was detained in strict confinement, and threatened either with death or exile.

The military historian,⁵⁴ who was himself despatched to observe the army of the Persians, as they were preparing to construct a bridge of boats over the Tigris, beheld from an eminence the plain of Assyria, as far as the edge of the horizon, covered with men, with horses, and with arms. Sapor appeared in the front, conspicuous by the splendour of his purple. On his left hand, the place of honour among the Orientals, Grumbates, king of the Chionites, displayed the stern countenance of an aged and renowned warrior. The monarch had reserved a similar place on his right hand for the king of the Albanians, who led his independent tribes from the shores of the Caspian. The satraps and generals were distributed according to their several ranks, and the whole army, besides the numerous train of oriental luxury, consisted of more than one hundred thousand effective men, inured to fatigue, and selected from the bravest nations of Asia. The Roman deserter, who in some measure guided the councils of Sapor, had prudently advised, that, instead of wasting the summer in tedious and difficult sieges, he should march directly to the Euphrates, and press forwards without delay to seize the feeble and wealthy metropolis of Syria. But the Persians were no sooner advanced into the plains of Mesopotamia than they discovered that every precaution had been used which could retard their progress or defeat their design. The inhabitants with their cattle were secured in places of strength, the green forage throughout the country was set on fire, the fords of the river were fortified by sharp stakes, military engines were planted on the opposite banks, and a seasonable swell of the waters of the Euphrates deterred the barbarians from attempting the ordinary passage of the bridge of Thapsacus. Their skilful guide, changing his plan of operations, then conducted the army by a longer circuit, but through a fertile territory, towards the head of the Euphrates,

triumphed over the law of Mahomet. *Brisson de Regno Pers.* l. ii. p. 462-472, and *Bardin, Voyages en Perse*, tom. iii. p. 90.

⁵⁴ *Ammian.* l. xviii. 6, 7, 8, 10.

where the infant river is reduced to a shallow and accessible stream. Sapor overlooked, with prudent disdain, the strength of Nisibis; but as he passed under the walls of Amida, he resolved to try whether the majesty of his presence would not awe the garrison into immediate submission. The sacrilegious insult of a random dart, which glanced against the royal tiara, convinced him of his error; and the indignant monarch listened with impatience to the advice of his ministers, who conjured him not to sacrifice the success of his ambition to the gratification of his resentment. The following day Grumbates advanced towards the gates with a select body of troops, and required the instant surrender of the city, as the only atonement which could be accepted for such an act of rashness and insolence. His proposals were answered by a general discharge, and his only son, a beautiful and valiant youth, was pierced through the heart by a javelin, shot from one of the balistæ. The funeral of the prince of the Chionites was celebrated according to the rites of his country; and the grief of his aged father was alleviated by the solemn promise of Sapor, that the guilty city of Amida should serve as a funeral pile to expiate the death, and to perpetuate the memory, of his son.

The ancient city of Amid or Amida,⁵⁵ which sometimes assumes the provincial appellation of Diarbekir,⁵⁶ is advantageously situate in a fertile plain, watered by the natural and artificial channels of the Tigris, of which the least inconsiderable stream bends in a semicircular form round the eastern part of the city. The emperor Constantius had recently conferred on Amida the honour of his own name, and the additional fortifications of strong walls and lofty towers. It was provided with an arsenal of military engines, and the ordinary garrison had been reinforced to the amount of seven legions, when the place was invested by the arms of Sapor.⁵⁷ His

Siege of
Amida.

⁵⁵ For the description of Amida, see d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 108; *Histoire de Timur Bec*, par Cherefeddin Ali, l. iii. c. 41. Ahmed Arabsiades, tom. i. p. 331, c. 43; *Voyages de Tavernier*, tom. i. p. 301; *Voyages d'Otter*, tom. ii. p. 273; and *Voyages de Niebuhr*, tom. ii. p. 324-328. The last of these travellers, a learned and accurate Dane, has given a plan of Amida, which illustrates the operations of the siege.

⁵⁶ Diarbekir, which is styled Amid, or Kara-Amid, in the public writings of the Turks, contains above 16,600 houses, and is the residence of a pasha with three tails. The epithet of *Kara* is derived from the blackness of the stone which composes the strong and ancient wall of Amida.

⁵⁷ The operations of the siege of Amida are very minutely described by Ammianus (xix. 1-9), who acted an honourable part in the defence, and escaped with difficulty when the city was stormed by the Persians.

* In my *Mém. Hist. sur l'Arménie*, vol. i. pp. 166-173, I conceive that I have proved this city (still called by the Armenians Dikranagerd, the city of Tigranes) to be the same with the famous Tigranocerta, of which the situation was unknown. St Martin, l. 432. Faustus of Byzantium,

nearly a contemporary (Armenian), states that the Persians, on becoming masters of it, destroyed 40,000 houses, though Ammianus describes the city as of no great extent (*civitatis ambitum non nimium amplæ*). St. Martin, ii. 290.—M

first and most sanguine hopes depended on the success of a general assault. To the several nations which followed his standard their respective posts were assigned; the south to the Vertæ; the north to the Albanians; the east to the Chionites, inflamed with grief and indignation; the west to the Segestans, the bravest of his warriors, who covered their front with a formidable line of Indian elephants.⁵⁸ The Persians, on every side, supported their efforts, and animated their courage; and the monarch himself, careless of his rank and safety, displayed, in the prosecution of the siege, the ardour of a youthful soldier. After an obstinate combat the barbarians were repulsed; they incessantly returned to the charge; they were again driven back with a dreadful slaughter, and two rebel legions of Gauls, who had been banished into the East, signalised their undisciplined courage by a nocturnal sally into the heart of the Persian camp. In one of the fiercest of these repeated assaults, Amida was betrayed by the treachery of a deserter, who indicated to the barbarians a secret and neglected staircase, scooped out of the rock that hangs over the stream of the Tigris. Seventy chosen archers of the royal guard ascended in silence to the third story of a lofty tower, which commanded the precipice; they elevated on high the Persian banner, the signal of confidence to the assailants, and of dismay to the besieged; and if this devoted band could have maintained their post a few minutes longer, the reduction of the place might have been purchased by the sacrifice of their lives. After Sapor had tried, without success, the efficacy of force and of stratagem, he had recourse to the slower but more certain operations of a regular siege, in the conduct of which he was instructed by the skill of the Roman deserters. The trenches were opened at a convenient distance, and the troops destined for that service advanced, under the portable cover of strong hurdles, to fill up the ditch, and undermine the foundations of the walls. Wooden towers were at the same time constructed, and moved forwards on wheels, till the soldiers, who were provided with every species of missile weapons, could engage almost on level ground

⁵⁸ Of these four nations the Albanians are too well known to require any description. The Segestans [*Sacastenæ*, *St. Martin*] inhabited a large and level country, which still preserves their name, to the south of Khorasan and the west of Hindostan. (See *Geographia Nubiensis*, p. 133; and *d'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 797.) Notwithstanding the boasted victory of Bahram (vol. i. p. 410), the Segestans, above fourscore years afterwards, appear as an independent nation, the ally of Persia. We are ignorant of the situation of the Vertæ and Chionites, but I am inclined to place them (at least the latter) towards the confines of India and Scythia. See *Ammian.* xvi. 9.^a

^a The Vertæ are still unknown. It is possible that the Chionites are the same as the Huns. These people were already known; and we find from Armenian authors that they were making, at this period, incursions into Asia. They were often at war with the Persians. The name was perhaps pronounced differently in the East and in the West, and this prevents us from recognising it. *St. Martin*, ii. 177.—M

with the troops who defended the rampart. Every mode of resistance which art could suggest, or courage could execute, was employed in the defence of Amida, and the works of Sapor were more than once destroyed by the fire of the Romans. But the resources of a besieged city may be exhausted. The Persians repaired their losses and pushed their approaches; a large breach was made by the battering-ram, and the strength of the garrison, wasted by the sword and by disease, yielded to the fury of the assault. The soldiers, the citizens, their wives, their children, all who had not time to escape through the opposite gate, were involved by the conquerors in a promiscuous massacre.

But the ruin of Amida was the safety of the Roman provinces. As soon as the first transports of victory had subsided, Sapor ^{Of Singara, &c.} was at leisure to reflect that to chastise a disobedient city ^{A.D. 360.} he had lost the flower of his troops and the most favourable season for conquest.⁵⁹ Thirty thousand of his veterans had fallen under the walls of Amida during the continuance of a siege which lasted seventy-three days; and the disappointed monarch returned to his capital with affected triumph and secret mortification. It is more than probable that the inconstancy of his barbarian allies was tempted to relinquish a war in which they had encountered such unexpected difficulties; and that the aged king of the Chionites, satiated with revenge, turned away with horror from a scene of action where he had been deprived of the hope of his family and nation. The strength as well as spirit of the army with which Sapor took the field in the ensuing spring was no longer equal to the unbounded views of his ambition. Instead of aspiring to the conquest of the East, he was obliged to content himself with the reduction of two

⁵⁹ Ammianus has marked the chronology of this year by three signs, which do not perfectly coincide with each other, or with the series of the history. 1. The corn was ripe when Sapor invaded Mesopotamia: "Cum jam stipulæ flavente turgerent;" a circumstance which, in the latitude of Aleppo, would naturally refer us to the month of April or May. See Harmer's Observations on Scripture, vol. i. p. 41. Shaw's Travels, p. 335, edit. 4to. 2. The progress of Sapor was checked by the overflowing of the Euphrates, which generally happens in July and August. Plin. Hist. Nat. v. 21. Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, tom. i. p. 696. 3. When Sapor had taken Amida, after a siege of seventy-three days, the autumn was far advanced. "Autumno præcipiti hædorumque improbo sidere exorto." To reconcile these apparent contradictions, we must allow for some delay in the Persian king, some inaccuracy in the historian, and some disorder in the seasons."

"Clinton remarks there seems no such difficulty as Gibbon has supposed. Amida was taken about October 7 (hædorum improbo sidere exorto, i.e., Oct. 6), and consequently the siege began about July 27. Before the siege the army of Sapor had approached the Euphrates nivibus tabe-

factis inflatum, and it began to rise sole obtinente vicesiman partem Caneri (Plin. Hist. Nat. v. 26), about July 8. Sapor might have consumed two months in Mesopotamia after he had crossed the Tigris at the beginning of May. Clinton. Fasti Rom. vol. i. p. 442. -S.

fortified cities of Mesopotamia, Singara and Bezabde,⁶⁰ the one situate in the midst of a sandy desert, the other in a small peninsula, surrounded almost on every side by the deep and rapid stream of the Tigris. Five Roman legions, of the diminutive size to which they had been reduced in the age of Constantine, were made prisoners, and sent into remote captivity on the extreme confines of Persia. After dismantling the walls of Singara, the conqueror abandoned that solitary and sequestered place; but he carefully restored the fortifications of Bezabde, and fixed in that important post a garrison or colony of veterans, amply supplied with every means of defence, and animated by high sentiments of honour and fidelity. Towards the close of the campaign the arms of Sapor incurred some disgrace by an unsuccessful enterprise against Virtha, or Tecrit, a strong, or, as it was universally esteemed till the age of Tamerlane, an impregnable fortress of the independent Arabs.⁶¹

The defence of the East against the arms of Sapor required, and would have exercised, the abilities of the most consummate general; and it seemed fortunate for the state that it was the actual province of the brave Ursicinus, who alone deserved the confidence of the soldiers and people. In the hour of danger Ursicinus⁶² was removed from his station by the intrigues of the eunuchs; and the military command of the East was bestowed, by the same influence, on Sabinian, a wealthy and subtle veteran, who had attained the infirmities, without acquiring the experience, of age.

⁶⁰ The account of these sieges is given by Ammianus, xx. 6, 7.*

⁶¹ For the identity of Virtha and Tecrit, see d'Anville, *Géographie Ancienne*, tom. ii. p. 201. For the siege of that castle by Timur Bec, or Tamerlane, see Cherefeddin, l. iii. c. 33. The Persian biographer exaggerates the merit and difficulty of this exploit, which delivered the caravans of Bagdad from a formidable gang of robbers.^b

⁶² Ammianus (xviii. 5, 6, xix. 3, xx. 2) represents the merit and disgrace of Ursicinus with that faithful attention which a soldier owed to his general. Some partiality may be suspected, yet the whole account is consistent and probable.

* On the site of Singara, see note, vol. ii. p. 97. Bezabde, now called Jeziréh, is situated on a low sandy island in the Tigris, about 60 miles below the junction of its eastern and western branches, and 23 miles N.E. of the junction of the Khabur with the Tigris. The island is covered with modern buildings, which, generally speaking, are in a ruined state. Kinneir, *Journey through Asia Minor*, &c., p. 450; Chesney, *Expedition Euphrat*, vol. i. p. 19.—S.

^b Tekrit is situated on the right bank of the Tigris, between Mosul and Baghdad, and is now almost the only permanent settlement of any importance between these two towns. It is a small town, but was once a place of some size and strength. The remains of an ancient castle, surrounded by a ditch, crown a

sandstone rock rising about 200 feet above the Tigris. Tekrit is celebrated as the birthplace of Saladin. Rich, *Koordistan*, vol. ii. p. 146; Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 467. The word BIRTHA, or Virtha, means in Syriac a fortress or castle, and hence might be applied to many places. St. Martin thinks that the Virtha of Ammianus lay too far south to be the same as Tekrit; but this is not an insuperable difficulty; and there is no other place with which it can be so well identified. There was a BIRTHA on the right bank of the Euphrates, the modern Bir, and also a town of the same name to the S.E. of Thapsacus; but neither of these can be the Virtha of Ammianus. St. Martin, *Notes on Le Beau*, vol. ii. p. 344; Smith, *Diet.*, of Greek and Rom. Geogr. vol. i. p. 402.—S.

By a second order, which issued from the same jealous and inconstant counsels, Ursicinus was again despatched to the frontier of Mesopotamia, and condemned to sustain the labours of a war, the honours of which had been transferred to his unworthy rival. Sabinian fixed his indolent station under the walls of Edessa; and while he amused himself with the idle parade of military exercise, and moved to the sound of flutes in the Pyrrhic dance, the public defence was abandoned to the boldness and diligence of the former general of the East. But whenever Ursicinus recommended any vigorous plan of operations; when he proposed, at the head of a light and active army, to wheel round the foot of the mountains, to intercept the convoys of the enemy, to harass the wide extent of the Persian lines, and to relieve the distress of Amida; the timid and envious commander alleged that he was restrained by his positive orders from endangering the safety of the troops. Amida was at length taken; its bravest defenders, who had escaped the sword of the barbarians, died in the Roman camp by the hand of the executioner; and Ursicinus himself, after supporting the disgrace of a partial inquiry, was punished for the misconduct of Sabinian by the loss of his military rank. But Constantius soon experienced the truth of the prediction which honest indignation had extorted from his injured lieutenant, that, as long as such maxims of government were suffered to prevail, the emperor himself would find it no easy task to defend his eastern dominions from the invasion of a foreign enemy. When he had subdued or pacified the barbarians of the Danube, Constantius proceeded by slow marches into the East; and after he had wept over the smoking ruins of Amida, he formed, with a powerful army, the siege of Bezabde. The walls were shaken by the reiterated efforts of the most enormous of the battering-rams; the town was reduced to the last extremity; but it was still defended by the patient and intrepid valour of the garrison, till the approach of the rainy season obliged the emperor to raise the siege, and ingloriously to retreat into his winter-quarters at Antioch.⁶³ The pride of Constantius, and the ingenuity of his courtiers, were at a loss to discover any materials for panegyric in the events of the Persian war; while the glory of his cousin Julian, to whose military command he had intrusted the provinces of Gaul, was proclaimed to the world in the simple and concise narrative of his exploits.

⁶³ Ammian. xx. 11. *Omisso vano incepto, hiematurus Antiochiæ redit in Syriam ærumnosam, perpeßus et ulcerum sed et atrociam, diuque deflenda.* It is *thus* that James Gronovius has restored an obscure passage; and he thinks that this correction alone would have deserved a new edition of his author; whose sense may now be darkly perceived. I expected some additional light from the recent labours of the learned Ernestus. (Lipsiæ, 1773.)

In the blind fury of civil discord, Constantius had abandoned to the barbarians of Germany the countries of Gaul, which still acknowledged the authority of his rival. A numerous swarm of Franks and Alemanni were invited to cross the Rhine by presents and promises, by the hopes of spoil, and by a perpetual grant of all the territories which they should be able to subdue.⁶⁴ But the emperor, who for a temporary service had thus imprudently provoked the rapacious spirit of the barbarians, soon discovered and lamented the difficulty of dismissing these formidable allies, after they had tasted the richness of the Roman soil. Regardless of the nice distinction of loyalty and rebellion, these undisciplined robbers treated as their natural enemies all the subjects of the empire who possessed any property which they were desirous of acquiring. Forty-five flourishing cities, Tongres, Cologne, Treves, Worms, Spire, Strasburgh, &c., besides a far greater number of towns and villages, were pillaged, and for the most part reduced to ashes. The barbarians of Germany, still faithful to the maxims of their ancestors, abhorred the confinement of walls, to which they applied the odious names of prisons and sepulchres; and, fixing their independent habitations on the banks of rivers, the Rhine, the Moselle, and the Meuse, they secured themselves against the danger of a surprise, by a rude and hasty fortification of large trees, which were felled and thrown across the roads. The Alemanni were established in the modern countries of Alsace and Lorraine; the Franks occupied the island of the Batavians, together with an extensive district of Brabant, which was then known by the appellation of *Toxandria*,⁶⁵ and may deserve to be considered as the original seat of their Gallic monarchy.⁶⁶ From the sources to the mouth of the Rhine, the conquests of the Germans extended above forty miles to the west of that river, over a country peopled by colonies of their own name and nation; and the scene of their devastations was three times more extensive than that of their conquests. At a still greater distance the open towns of

Invasion of
Gaul by the
Germans.

⁶⁴ The ravages of the Germans, and the distress of Gaul, may be collected from Julian himself. *Orat. ad S. P. Q. Athen.* p. 277. *Ammian.* xv. 11 [8?]. *Libanius, Orat.* x. *Zosimus*, l. iii. [c. 3] p. 140. *Sozomen*, l. iii. c. 1. [*Mamertin. Grat. Act.* c. iv.]

⁶⁵ *Ammianus* (xvii. 8). This name seems to be derived from the *Toxandri* of Pliny, and very frequently occurs in the histories of the middle age. *Toxandria* was a country of woods and morasses, which extended from the neighbourhood of Tongres to the conflux of the Vahal and the Rhine. See *Valesius, Notit. Galliar.* p. 558.

⁶⁶ The paradox of P. Daniel, that the Franks never obtained any permanent settlement on this side of the Rhine before the time of Clovis, is refuted with much learning and good sense by M. Biet, who has proved, by a chain of evidence, their uninterrupted possession of *Toxandria* one hundred and thirty years before the accession of Clovis. The Dissertation of M. Biet was crowned by the Academy of Soissons in the year 1736, and seems to have been justly preferred to the discourse of his more celebrated competitor, the Abbé le Bœuf, an antiquarian whose name was happily expressive of his talents.

Gaul were deserted, and the inhabitants of the fortified cities, who trusted to their strength and vigilance, were obliged to content themselves with such supplies of corn as they could raise on the vacant land within the enclosure of their walls. The diminished legions, destitute of pay and provisions, of arms and discipline, trembled at the approach, and even at the name, of the barbarians.

Under these melancholy circumstances, an unexperienced youth was appointed to save and to govern the provinces of Gaul, or rather, as he expresses it himself, to exhibit the ^{conduct of} ~~van~~ Julian. image of Imperial greatness. The retired scholastic education of Julian, in which he had been more conversant with books than with arms, with the dead than with the living, left him in profound ignorance of the practical arts of war and government; and when he awkwardly repeated some military exercise which it was necessary for him to learn, he exclaimed with a sigh, "O Plato, Plato, what a task for a philosopher!" Yet even this speculative philosophy, which men of business are too apt to despise, had filled the mind of Julian with the noblest precepts and the most shining examples; had animated him with the love of virtue, the desire of fame, and the contempt of death. The habits of temperance recommended in the schools are still more essential in the severe discipline of a camp. The simple wants of nature regulated the measure of his food and sleep. Rejecting with disdain the delicacies provided for his table, he satisfied his appetite with the coarse and common fare which was allotted to the meanest soldiers. During the rigour of a Gallic winter he never suffered a fire in his bedchamber; and after a short and interrupted slumber, he frequently rose in the middle of the night from a carpet spread on the floor, to despatch any urgent business, to visit his rounds, or to steal a few moments for the prosecution of his favourite studies.⁶⁷ The precepts of eloquence, which he had hitherto practised on fancied topics of declamation, were more usefully applied to excite or to assuage the passions of an armed multitude: and although Julian, from his early habits of conversation and literature, was more familiarly acquainted with the beauties of the Greek language, he had attained a competent knowledge of the Latin tongue.⁶⁸ Since Julian was not originally designed for the character of a legislator or a judge, it is probable that the civil jurisprudence of the Romans had not engaged any considerable share of his attention: but he derived from his

⁶⁷ The private life of Julian in Gaul, and the severe discipline which he embraced, are displayed by Ammianus (xvi. 5), who professes to praise, and by Julian himself, who affects to ridicule (*Misopogon*, p. 340) a conduct which, in a prince of the house of Constantine, might justly excite the surprise of mankind.

⁶⁸ *Aderat Latine quoque disserendi sufficiens sermo.* Ammianus, xvi. 5. But Julian, educated in the schools of Greece, always considered the language of the Romans as a foreign and popular dialect, which he might use on necessary occasions.

philosophic studies an inflexible regard for justice, tempered by a disposition to clemency, the knowledge of the general principles of equity and evidence, and the faculty of patiently investigating the most intricate and tedious questions which could be proposed for his discussion. The measures of policy, and the operations of war, must submit to the various accidents of circumstance and character, and the unpractised student will often be perplexed in the application of the most perfect theory. But in the acquisition of this important science Julian was assisted by the active vigour of his own genius, as well as by the wisdom and experience of Sallust, an officer of rank, who soon conceived a sincere attachment for a prince so worthy of his friendship; and whose incorruptible integrity was adorned by the talent of insinuating the harshest truths without wounding the delicacy of a royal ear.⁶⁹

Immediately after Julian had received the purple at Milan he was sent into Gaul with a feeble retinue of three hundred and sixty soldiers. At Vienna, where he passed a painful and anxious winter, in the hands of those ministers to whom Constantius had intrusted the direction of his conduct, the Cæsar was informed of the siege and deliverance of Autun. That large and ancient city, protected only by a ruined wall and pusillanimous garrison, was saved by the generous resolution of a few veterans, who resumed their arms for the defence of their country. In his march from Autun, through the heart of the Gallic provinces, Julian embraced with ardour the earliest opportunity of signalizing his courage. At the head of a small body of archers and heavy cavalry, he preferred the shorter but the more dangerous of two roads;^a and sometimes eluding and sometimes resisting the attacks of the barbarians, who were masters of the field, he arrived with honour and safety at the camp near Rheims, where the Roman troops had been ordered to assemble. The aspect of their young prince revived the drooping spirit of the soldiers, and they marched from Rheims in search of the enemy with a confidence which had almost proved fatal to them. The Alemanni, familiarized to the knowledge of the country, secretly collected their scattered forces, and, seizing the opportunity of a dark

⁶⁹ We are ignorant of the actual office of this excellent minister, whom Julian afterwards created præfect of Gaul. Sallust was speedily recalled by the jealousy of the emperor; and we may still read a sensible but pedantic discourse (p. 240-252), in which Julian deplors the loss of so valuable a friend, to whom he acknowledges himself indebted for his reputation. See La Bléterie, *Préface à la Vie de Jovien*, p. 20.

^a *Aliis per Arbor—quibusdam per Sedelaucum et Coram iri debere firmantibus.* Amm. Marc. xvi. 2. I do not know what place can be meant by the mutilated name Arbor, Sedelaucus is Saulieu, a small

town of the department of the Côte d'Or, six leagues from Autun. Cora answers to the village of Cure, on the river of the same name, between Autun and Nevers St. Martin, ii. 162.—M.

and rainy day, poured with unexpected fury on the rear-guard of the Romans. Before the inevitable disorder could be remedied, two legions were destroyed; and Julian was taught by experience that caution and vigilance are the most important lessons of the art of war. In a second and more successful action^a he recovered and established his military fame; but as the agility of the barbarians saved them from the pursuit, his victory was neither bloody nor decisive. He advanced, however, to the banks of the Rhine, surveyed the ruins of Cologne, convinced himself of the difficulties of the war, and retreated on the approach of winter, discontented with the court, with his army, and with his own success.⁷⁰ The power of the enemy was yet unbroken; and the Cæsar had no sooner separated his troops, and fixed his own quarters at Sens, in the centre of Gaul, than he was surrounded and besieged by a numerous host of Germans. Reduced in this extremity to the resources of his own mind, he displayed a prudent intrepidity which compensated for all the deficiencies of the place and garrison; and the barbarians, at the end of thirty days, were obliged to retire with disappointed rage.

The conscious pride of Julian, who was indebted only to his sword for this signal deliverance, was embittered by the reflection that he was abandoned, betrayed, and perhaps devoted to destruction, by those who were bound to assist him by every tie of honour and fidelity. Marcellus, master-general of the cavalry in Gaul, interpreting too strictly the jealous orders of the court, beheld with supine indifference the distress of Julian, and had restrained the troops under his command from marching to the relief of Sens. If the Cæsar had dissembled in silence so dangerous an insult, his person and authority would have been exposed to the contempt of the world; and if an action so criminal had been suffered to pass with impunity, the emperor would have confirmed the suspicions which received a very specious colour from his past conduct towards the princes of the Flavian family. Marcellus was recalled, and gently dismissed from his office.⁷¹ In his room Severus was appointed general of the cavalry; an experienced soldier, of approved courage and fidelity, who could advise with respect, and execute with zeal; and who submitted, without reluctance, to the supreme command which Julian,

⁷⁰ Ammianus (xvi. 2, 3) appears much better satisfied with the success of this first campaign than Julian himself; who very fairly owns that he did nothing of consequence, and that he fled before the enemy.

⁷¹ Ammian. xvi. 7. Libanius speaks rather more advantageously of the military talents of Marcellus, *Orat. x.* p. 272. And Julian insinuates that he would not have been so easily recalled, unless he had given other reasons of offence to the court, p. 278.

^a Fought at Brocomagus, now Brumat Haguenau, where many Roman remains on the Zorn, between Strasburg and have been found.—S.

by the interest of his patroness Eusebia, at length obtained over the armies of Gaul.⁷² A very judicious plan of operations was adopted for the approaching campaign. Julian himself, at the head of the remains of the veteran bands, and of some new levies which he had been permitted to form, boldly penetrated into the centre of the German cantonments, and carefully re-established the fortifications of Saverne, in an advantageous post which would either check the incursions or intercept the retreat of the enemy. At the same time Barbatio, general of the infantry, advanced from Milan with an army of thirty thousand men, and, passing the mountains, prepared to throw a bridge over the Rhine, in the neighbourhood of Basil. It was reasonable to expect that the Alemanni, pressed on either side by the Roman arms, would soon be forced to evacuate the provinces of Gaul, and to hasten to the defence of their native country. But the hopes of the campaign were defeated by the incapacity, or the envy, or the secret instructions of Barbatio, who acted as if he had been the enemy of the Cæsar, and the secret ally of the barbarians. The negligence with which he permitted a troop of pillagers freely to pass, and to return, almost before the gates of his camp, may be imputed to his want of abilities; but the treasonable act of burning a number of boats, and a superfluous stock of provisions, which would have been of the most essential service to the army of Gaul, was an evidence of his hostile and criminal intentions. The Germans despised an enemy who appeared destitute either of power or of inclination to offend them; and the ignominious retreat of Barbatio deprived Julian of the expected support, and left him to extricate himself from a hazardous situation, where he could neither remain with safety, nor retire with honour.⁷³

As soon as they were delivered from the fears of invasion, the Alemanni prepared to chastise the Roman youth who presumed to dispute the possession of that country which they claimed as their own by the right of conquest and of treaties. They employed three days, and as many nights, in transporting over the Rhine their military powers. The fierce Chnodomar, shaking the ponderous javelin which he had victoriously wielded against the brother of Magnentius, led the van of the barbarians, and moderated by his experience the martial ardour which his example

Battle of
Strasbourg,
A.D. 357.
August.

⁷² Severus, non discors, non arrogans, sed longa militiæ frugalitate compertus; et eum recta præeuntem secuturus, ut ductorem morigerus miles. Ammian. xvi. 11. Zosimus, l. iii. [c. 2] p. 140.

⁷³ On the design and failure of the co-operation between Julian and Barbatio, see Ammianus (xvi. 11), and Libanius, Orat. x. p. 273.*

* Barbatio seems to have allowed himself to be surprised and defeated.— M.

inspired.⁷⁴ He was followed by six other kings, by ten princes of regal extraction, by a long train of high-spirited nobles, and by thirty-five thousand of the bravest warriors of the tribes of Germany. The confidence derived from the view of their own strength was increased by the intelligence which they received from a deserter, that the Cæsar, with a feeble army of thirteen thousand men, occupied a post about one-and-twenty miles from their camp of Strasburg. With this inadequate force Julian resolved to seek and to encounter the barbarian host; and the chance of a general action was preferred to the tedious and uncertain operation of separately engaging the dispersed parties of the Alemanni. The Romans marched in close order, and in two columns; the cavalry on the right, the infantry on the left; and the day was so far spent when they appeared in sight of the enemy, that Julian was desirous of deferring the battle till the next morning, and of allowing his troops to recruit their exhausted strength by the necessary refreshments of sleep and food. Yielding, however, with some reluctance, to the clamours of the soldiers, and even to the opinion of his council, he exhorted them to justify by their valour the eager impatience which, in case of a defeat, would be universally branded with the epithets of rashness and presumption. The trumpets sounded, the military shout was heard through the field, and the two armies rushed with equal fury to the charge. The Cæsar, who conducted in person his right wing, depended on the dexterity of his archers and the weight of his cuirassiers. But his ranks were instantly broken by an irregular mixture of light-horse and of light-infantry, and he had the mortification of beholding the flight of six hundred of his most renowned cuirassiers.⁷⁵ The fugitives were stopped and rallied by the presence and authority of Julian, who, careless of his own safety, threw himself before them, and, urging every motive of shame and honour, led them back against the victorious enemy. The conflict between the two lines of infantry was obstinate and bloody. The Germans possessed the superiority of strength and stature, the Romans that of discipline and temper; and as the barbarians who served under the standard of the empire united the respective advantages of both parties, their strenuous efforts, guided by a skilful leader, at length determined the event of the day. The Romans lost four tribunes, and two hundred and forty-

⁷⁴ Ammianus (xvi. 12) describes with his inflated eloquence the figure and character of Chnodomar. *Audax et fidens ingenti robore lacertorum, ubi ardor proslī sperabatur immanis, equo spumante, sublimior, erectus in jaculum formidandæ vastitatis, armoque nitore conspicuus: antea strenuus et miles, et utilis præter cæteros ductor Decentium Cæsarem superavit æquo Marte congressus.*

⁷⁵ After the battle Julian ventured to revive the rigour of ancient discipline by exposing these fugitives in female apparel to the derision of the whole camp. In the next campaign these troops nobly retrieved their honour. Zosimus, l. iii. [c 3] p. 142.

three soldiers, in this memorable battle of Strasburg, so glorious to the Cæsar,⁷⁶ and so salutary to the afflicted provinces of Gaul. Six thousand of the Alemanni were slain in the field, without including those who were drowned in the Rhine, or transfixcd with darts whilst they attempted to swim across the river.⁷⁷ Chnodomar himself was surrounded and taken prisoner, with three of his brave companions, who had devoted themselves to follow in life or death the fate of their chieftain. Julian received him with military pomp in the council of his officers; and expressing a generous pity for the fallen state, dissembled his inward contempt for the abject humiliation of his captive. Instead of exhibiting the vanquished king of the Alemanni as a grateful spectacle to the cities of Gaul, he respectfully laid at the feet of the emperor this splendid trophy of his victory. Chnodomar experienced an honourable treatment: but the impatient barbarian could not long survive his defeat, his confinement, and his exile.⁷⁸

After Julian had repulsed the Alemanni from the provinces of the Upper Rhine, he turned his arms against the Franks, who were seated nearer to the ocean, on the confines of Gaul and Germany; and who, from their numbers, and still more from their intrepid valour, had ever been esteemed the most formidable of the barbarians.⁷⁹ Although they were strongly actuated by the allurements of rapine, they professed a disinterested love of war, which they considered as the supreme honour and felicity of human nature; and their minds and bodies were so completely hardened by perpetual action, that, according to the lively expression of an orator, the snows of winter were as pleasant to them as the flowers of spring. In the month of December which followed the battle of Strasburg, Julian attacked a body of six hundred Franks who had thrown themselves into two castles on the Meuse.⁸⁰ In the midst of

Julian subdues the Franks, A.D. 358.

⁷⁶ Julian himself (ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 279) speaks of the battle of Strasburg with the modesty of conscious merit; *ἡμαχισάμεν οὐκ ἀπλῶς, ἴσως καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς ἀφίκετο ἡ τοιαύτη μάχη*. Zosimus compares it with the victory of Alexander over Darius; and yet we are at a loss to discover any of those strokes of military genius which fix the attention of ages on the conduct and success of a single day.

⁷⁷ Ammianus, xvi. 12. Libanius adds 2000 more to the number of the slain (Orat. x. p. 274). But these trifling differences disappear before the 60,000 barbarians whom Zosimus has sacrificed to the glory of his hero (l. iii. [c. 3] p. 141). We might attribute this extravagant number to the carelessness of transcribers, if this credulous or partial historian had not swelled the army of 35,000 Alemanni to an innumerable multitude of barbarians, *πληθεὺς ἀπείρων βαρβάρων*. It is our own fault if this detection does not inspire us with proper distrust on similar occasions.

⁷⁸ Ammian. xvi. 12. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 276.

⁷⁹ Libanius (Orat. iii. p. 137) draws a very lively picture of the manners of the Franks.

⁸⁰ Ammianus, xvii. 2. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 278. The Greek orator, by misapprehending a passage of Julian, has been induced to represent the Franks as consisting of a thousand men; and, as his head was always full of the Peloponnesian war, he compares them to the Lacedæmonians, who were besieged and taken in the island of Sphacteria.

that severe season they sustained, with inflexible constancy, a siege of fifty-four days, till at length, exhausted by hunger, and satisfied that the vigilance of the enemy in breaking the ice of the river left them no hopes of escape, the Franks consented, for the first time, to dispense with the ancient law which commanded them to conquer or to die. The Cæsar immediately sent his captives to the court of Constantius, who, accepting them as a valuable present,⁸¹ rejoiced in the opportunity of adding so many heroes to the choicest troops of his domestic guards. The obstinate resistance of this handful of Franks apprised Julian of the difficulties of the expedition which he meditated for the ensuing spring against the whole body of the nation. His rapid diligence surprised and astonished the active barbarians. Ordering his soldiers to provide themselves with biscuit for twenty days, he suddenly pitched his camp near Tongres, while the enemy still supposed him in his winter-quarters of Paris, expecting the slow arrival of his convoys from Aquitain. Without allowing the Franks to unite or to deliberate, he skilfully spread his legions from Cologne to the ocean; and by the terror, as well as by the success of his arms, soon reduced the suppliant tribes to implore the clemency and to obey the commands of their conqueror. The Chamavians submissively retired to their former habitations beyond the Rhine; but the Salians were permitted to possess their new establishment of Toxandria, as the subjects and auxiliaries of the Roman empire.⁸² The treaty was ratified by solemn oaths; and perpetual inspectors were appointed to reside among the Franks, with the authority of enforcing the strict observance of the conditions. An incident is related, interesting enough in itself, and by no means repugnant to the character of Julian, who ingeniously contrived both the plot and the catastrophe of the tragedy. When the Chamavians sued for peace, he required the son of their king, as the only hostage on whom he could rely.

⁸¹ Julian. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 280. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 278. According to the expression of Libanius, the emperor *δῶρα ἀνόμεμα*, which La Blérierie understands (Vie de Julien, p. 118) as an honest confession, and Valesius (ad Ammian. xvii. 2) as a mean evasion, of the truth. Dom Bouquet (Historiens de France, tom. i. p. 733), by substituting another word, *ἐνόμεμα*, would suppress both the difficulty and the spirit of this passage.

⁸² Ammian. xvii. 8; Zosimus, l. iii. [c. 4, sq.] p. 146–150 (his narrative is darkened by a mixture of fable); and Julian. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 280. His expression, *ὑποδείξασθαι μὲν μείζαν τοῦ Σαλίων ἔθνος, καμάρους δὲ ἐξήλασα*. This difference of treatment confirms the opinion that the Salian Franks were permitted to retain the settlements in Toxandria.^a

^a A newly discovered fragment of Eunapius, whom Zosimus probably transcribed, illustrates this transaction. "Julian commanded the Romans to abstain from all hostile measures against the Salians, neither to waste nor ravage

their own country, for he called every country *their own* which was surrendered without resistance or toil on the part of the conquerors." Mai, Script. Vet. Nov. Collect. ii. 256; and Eunapius in Niebuhr, Byzant. Hist. p. 86.—M.

A mournful silence, interrupted by tears and groans, declared the sad perplexity of the barbarians; and their aged chief lamented, in pathetic language, that his private loss was now embittered by a sense of the public calamity. While the Chamavians lay prostrate at the foot of his throne, the royal captive, whom they believed to have been slain, unexpectedly appeared before their eyes; and as soon as the tumult of joy was hushed into attention, the Cæsar addressed the assembly in the following terms:—"Behold the son, the prince, whom you wept. You had lost him by your fault. God and the Romans have restored him to you. I shall still preserve and educate the youth, rather as a monument of my own virtue than as a pledge of your sincerity. Should you presume to violate the faith which you have sworn, the arms of the republic will avenge the perfidy, not on the innocent, but on the guilty." The barbarians withdrew from his presence, impressed with the warmest sentiments of gratitude and admiration.⁸³

It was not enough for Julian to have delivered the provinces of Gaul from the barbarians of Germany. He aspired to emulate the glory of the first and most illustrious of the emperors; after whose example he composed his own commentaries of the Gallic war.⁸⁴ Cæsar has related, with conscious pride, the manner in which he *twice* passed the Rhine. Julian could boast that, before he assumed the title of Augustus, he had carried the Roman eagles beyond that great river in *three* successful expeditions.⁸⁵ The consternation of the Germans after the battle of Strasburg encouraged him to the first attempt; and the reluctance of the troops soon yielded to the persuasive eloquence of a leader who shared the fatigues and dangers which he imposed on the meanest of the soldiers. The villages on either side of the Main, which were plentifully stored with corn and cattle, felt the ravages of an invading army. The principal houses, constructed with some imitation of Roman elegance, were consumed by the flames; and the Cæsar boldly advanced about ten miles, till his progress was stopped by a dark and impenetrable forest, undermined by subterraneous passages, which threatened with secret snares and ambush

⁸³ This interesting story, which Zosimus has abridged, is related by Eunapius (in Excerpt. Legationum, p. 15, 16, 17 [ed. Paris; p. 11 sq. ed. Ven.; cap. i. p. 41 sq. ed. Bonn]), with all the amplifications of Grecian rhetoric: but the silence of Libanius, of Ammianus, and of Julian himself, renders the truth of it extremely suspicious.

⁸⁴ Libanius, the friend of Julian, clearly insinuates (Orat. iv. p. 178) that his hero had composed the history of his Gallic campaigns. But Zosimus (l. iii. [c. 2] p. 140) seems to have derived his information only from the Orations (λόγοι) and the Epistles of Julian. The discourse which is addressed to the Athenians contains an accurate, though general, account of the war against the Germans.

⁸⁵ See Ammian. xvii. 1, 10, xviii. 2; and Zosim. l. iii. p. 144. Julian. ad S.P.Q. Athen. p. 280.

every step of the assailant. The ground was already covered with snow; and Julian, after repairing an ancient castle which had been erected by Trajan, granted a truce of ten months to the submissive barbarians. At the expiration of the truce Julian undertook a second expedition beyond the Rhine, to humble the pride of Surmar and Hortaire, two of the kings of the Alemanni, who had been present at the battle of Strasburg. They promised to restore all the Roman captives who yet remained alive; and as the Cæsar had procured an exact account from the cities and villages of Gaul of the inhabitants whom they had lost, he detected every attempt to deceive him with a degree of readiness and accuracy which almost established the belief of his supernatural knowledge. His third expedition was still more splendid and important than the two former. The Germans had collected their military powers, and moved along the opposite banks of the river, with a design of destroying the bridge, and of preventing the passage of the Romans. But this judicious plan of defence was disconcerted by a skilful diversion. Three hundred light-armed and active soldiers were detached in forty small boats, to fall down the stream in silence, and to land at some distance from the posts of the enemy. They executed their orders with so much boldness and celerity, that they had almost surprised the barbarian chiefs, who returned in the fearless confidence of intoxication from one of their nocturnal festivals. Without repeating the uniform and disgusting tale of slaughter and devastation, it is sufficient to observe that Julian dictated his own conditions of peace to six of the haughtiest kings of the Alemanni, three of whom were permitted to view the severe discipline and martial pomp of a Roman camp. Followed by twenty thousand captives, whom he had rescued from the chains of the barbarians, the Cæsar repassed the Rhine, after terminating a war, the success of which has been compared to the ancient glories of the Punic and Cimbric victories.

As soon as the valour and conduct of Julian had secured an interval of peace, he applied himself to a work more congenial to his humane and philosophic temper. The cities of Gaul, Restores the cities of Gaul. which had suffered from the inroads of the barbarians, he diligently repaired; and seven important posts, between Mentz and the mouth of the Rhine, are particularly mentioned as having been rebuilt and fortified by the order of Julian.⁸⁶ The vanquished Germans had

⁸⁶ Ammian. xviii. 2. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 279, 280. Of these seven posts, four are at present towns of some consequence—Bingen, Andernach, Bonn, and Nuyss. The other three, Tricesimæ, Quadriburgium, and Castra Herculis, or Heraclea, no longer subsist; but there is room to believe that, on the ground of Quadriburgium, the Dutch have constructed the fort of Schenk, a name so offensive to the fastidious

submitted to the just but humiliating condition of preparing and conveying the necessary materials. The active zeal of Julian urged the prosecution of the work; and such was the spirit which he had diffused among the troops, that the auxiliaries themselves, waiving their exemption from any duties of fatigue, contended in the most servile labours with the diligence of the Roman soldiers. It was incumbent on the Cæsar to provide for the subsistence as well as for the safety of the inhabitants and of the garrisons. The desertion of the former, and the mutiny of the latter, must have been the fatal and inevitable consequences of famine. The tillage of the provinces of Gaul had been interrupted by the calamities of war; but the scanty harvests of the continent were supplied, by his paternal care, from the plenty of the adjacent island. Six hundred large barks, framed in the forest of the Ardennes, made several voyages to the coast of Britain; and returning from thence, laden with corn, sailed up the Rhine, and distributed their cargoes to the several towns and fortresses along the banks of the river.⁸⁷ The arms of Julian had restored a free and secure navigation, which Constantius had offered to purchase at the expense of his dignity, and of a tributary present of two thousand pounds of silver. The emperor parsimoniously refused to his soldiers the sums which he granted with a lavish and trembling hand to the barbarians. The dexterity, as well as the firmness of Julian, was put to a severe trial, when he took the field with a discontented army, which had already served two campaigns without receiving any regular pay or any extraordinary donative.⁸⁸

A tender regard for the peace and happiness of his subjects was the ruling principle which directed, or seemed to direct, the administration of Julian.⁸⁹ He devoted the leisure of his winter-quarters to the offices of civil government; and affected to assume with more pleasure the character of a magistrate than that of a general. Before he took the field he devolved on the provincial governors most of the public and private causes which had been referred to his tribunal; but, on his return, he carefully revised

Civil administration of Julian.

delicacy of Boileau. See d'Anville, *Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule*, p. 183; Boileau, *Epître iv.* and the notes.*

⁸⁷ We may credit Julian himself, *Orat. ad S. P. Q. Atheniensem*, p. 279, *sq.*, who gives a very particular account of the transaction. Zosimus adds two hundred vessels more, l. iii. [c. 5] p. 145. If we computed the 600 corn ships of Julian at only seventy tons each, they were capable of exporting 120,000 quarters (see Arbuthnot's *Weights and Measures*, p. 237); and the country which could bear so large an exportation must already have attained an improved state of agriculture.

⁸⁸ The troops once broke out into a mutiny, immediately before the second passage of the Rhine. *Ammian.* xvii. 9.

⁸⁹ *Ammian.* xvi. 5, xviii. 1. Mamertinus in *Panegy.* Vet. xi. 4.

* *Heraclea*, perhaps Erkelens in the district of Juliers. *St. Martin*, ii. 311 —M.

their proceedings, mitigated the rigour of the law, and pronounced a second judgment on the judges themselves. Superior to the last temptation of virtuous minds, an indiscreet and intemperate zeal for justice, he restrained, with calmness and dignity, the warmth of an advocate who prosecuted, for extortion, the president of the Narbonne province. "Who will ever be found guilty," exclaimed the vehement Delphidius, "if it be enough to deny?" "And who," replied Julian, "will ever be innocent, if it is sufficient to affirm?" In the general administration of peace and war, the interest of the sovereign is commonly the same as that of his people; but Constantius would have thought himself deeply injured, if the virtues of Julian had defrauded him of any part of the tribute which he extorted from an oppressed and exhausted country. The prince who was invested with the ensigns of royalty might sometimes presume to correct the rapacious insolence of the inferior agents, to expose their corrupt arts, and to introduce an equal and easier mode of collection. But the management of the finances was more safely intrusted to Florentius, Prætorian præfect of Gaul, an effeminate tyrant, incapable of pity or remorse: and the haughty minister complained of the most decent and gentle opposition, while Julian himself was rather inclined to censure the weakness of his own behaviour. The Cæsar had rejected with abhorrence a mandate for the levy of an extraordinary tax; a new superindiction, which the præfect had offered for his signature; and the faithful picture of the public misery, by which he had been obliged to justify his refusal, offended the court of Constantius. We may enjoy the pleasure of reading the sentiments of Julian, as he expresses them with warmth and freedom in a letter to one of his most intimate friends. After stating his own conduct, he proceeds in the following terms:—"Was it possible for the disciple of Plato
"and Aristotle to act otherwise than I have done? Could I abandon
"the unhappy subjects intrusted to my care? Was I not called
"upon to defend them from the repeated injuries of these unfeeling
"robbers? A tribune who deserts his post is punished with death,
"and deprived of the honours of burial. With what justice could I
"pronounce *his* sentence, if, in the hour of danger, I myself neglected
"a duty far more sacred and far more important? God has placed
"me in this elevated post; his providence will guard and support
"me. Should I be condemned to suffer, I shall derive comfort from
"the testimony of a pure and upright conscience. Would to Heaven
"that I still possessed a counsellor like Sallust! If they think
"proper to send me a successor, I shall submit without reluctance;
"and had much rather improve the short opportunity of doing good,

“than enjoy a long and lasting impunity of evil.”⁹⁰ The precarious and dependent situation of Julian displayed his virtues and concealed his defects. The young hero who supported, in Gaul, the throne of Constantius, was not permitted to reform the vices of the government; but he had courage to alleviate or to pity the distress of the people. Unless he had been able to revive the martial spirit of the Romans, or to introduce the arts of industry and refinement among their savage enemies, he could not entertain any rational hopes of securing the public tranquillity, either by the peace or conquest of Germany. Yet the victories of Julian suspended for a short time the inroads of the barbarians, and delayed the ruin of the Western Empire.

His salutary influence restored the cities of Gaul, which had been so long exposed to the evils of civil discord, barbarian war, and domestic tyranny; and the spirit of industry was revived with the hopes of enjoyment. Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, again flourished under the protection of the laws; and the *curiæ*, or civil corporations, were again filled with useful and respectable members: the youth were no longer apprehensive of marriage; and married persons were no longer apprehensive of posterity: the public and private festivals were celebrated with customary pomp; and the frequent and secure intercourse of the provinces displayed the image of national prosperity.⁹¹ A mind like that of Julian must have felt the general happiness of which he was the author; but he viewed with peculiar satisfaction and complacency the city of Paris, the seat of his winter residence, and the object even of his partial affection.⁹² That splendid capital, which now embraces an ample territory on either side of the Seine, was originally confined to the small island in the midst of the river, from whence the inhabitants derived a supply of pure and salubrious water. The river bathed the foot of the walls; and the town was accessible only by two wooden bridges. A forest overspread the northern side of the Seine, but on the south, the ground which now bears the name of the University was insensibly covered with houses, and adorned with a

⁹⁰ Ammian. xvii. 3. Julian. Epistol. xvii. edit. Spanheim. Such a conduct almost justifies the encomium of Mamertinus. Ita illi anni spatia divisa sunt, ut aut Barbaros domitet, aut civibus jura restituat; perpetuum professus, aut contra hostem, aut contra vitia, certamen.

⁹¹ Libanius, Orat. Parental. in Imp. Julian. c. 38, in Fabricius Bibliothec. Græc. tom. vii. p. 263, 264.

⁹² See Julian. in Misopogon. p. 340, 341. The primitive state of Paris is illustrated by Henry Valesius (ad Ammian. xx. 4), his brother Hadrian Valesius, or de Valois, and M. d'Anville (in their respective Notitias of ancient Gaul), the Abbé de Longuerue (Description de la France, tom. i. p. 12, 13), and M. Bouamy (in the Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xv. p. 656-691).

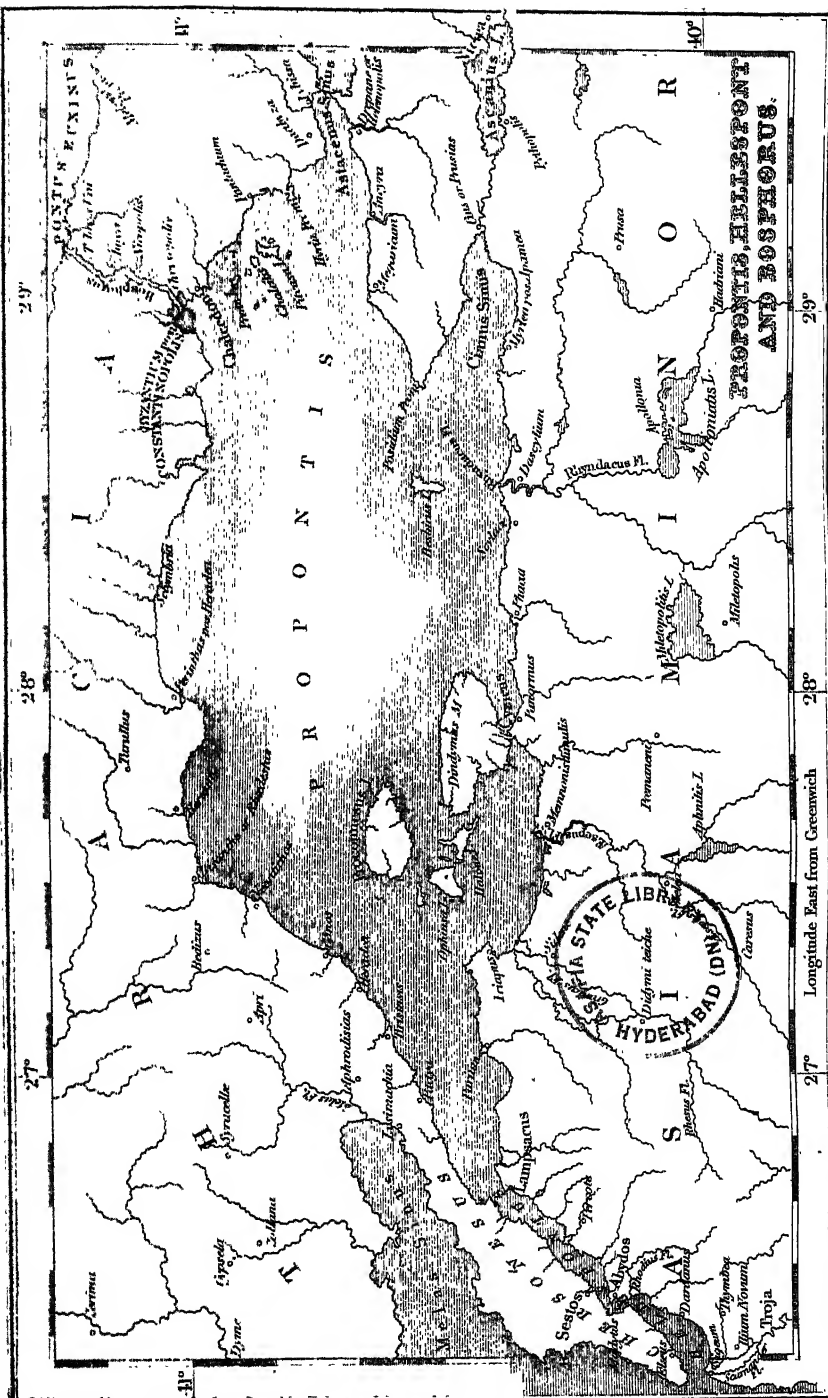
palace and amphitheatre, baths, an aqueduct, and a field of Mars for the exercise of the Roman troops. The severity of the climate was tempered by the neighbourhood of the ocean; and with some precautions, which experience had taught, the vine and fig-tree were successfully cultivated. But in remarkable winters the Seine was deeply frozen; and the huge pieces of ice that floated down the stream might be compared, by an Asiatic, to the blocks of white marble which were extracted from the quarries of Phrygia. The licentiousness and corruption of Antioch recalled to the memory of Julian the severe and simple manners of his beloved Lutetia,⁹³ where the amusements of the theatre were unknown or despised. He indignantly contrasted the effeminate Syrians with the brave and honest simplicity of the Gauls, and almost forgave the intemperance which was the only stain of the Celtic character.⁹⁴ If Julian could now revisit the capital of France, he might converse with men of science and genius, capable of understanding and of instructing a disciple of the Greeks; he might excuse the lively and graceful follies of a nation whose martial spirit has never been enervated by the indulgence or luxury; and he must applaud the perfection of that inestimable art which softens and refines and embellishes the intercourse of social life.

⁹³ Τὴν φιλὴν Λευκεσίαν. Julian. in Misopogon. p. 340. Leucetia, or Lutetia, was the ancient name of the city which, according to the fashion of the fourth century, assumed the territorial appellation of *Parisiū*.

⁹⁴ Julian. in Misopogon. p. 359, 360.

END OF VOL. II.

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